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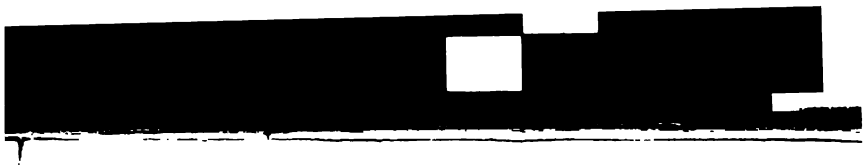
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THE AMERICAN DEMOCRACY.

JEFFERSON

AND

THE AMERICAN DEMOCRACY:

AN HISTORICAL STUDY.

20/052.

BY CORNÉLIS DE WITT.

TRANSLATED, WITH THE AUTHOR'S PERMISSION, BY

R. S. H. CHURCH.

...TON H...

LONDON:
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AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

THIS historical study of American democracy, portions of which have appeared in the 'Revue de Deux Mondes' between 1857 and 1860, was written before the formidable outbreak which now desolates the United States. It is not, therefore, a work got up for the occasion; but, though not written for the purpose of explaining the actual crisis, it nevertheless contains a variety of particulars tending to throw light upon the nature of the evils to which the United States have been subject from their very beginning, and which, I think, will not be unacceptable to those who concern themselves about the fate of democratic societies.

The sources from which I have principally derived my materials are these: —

The collection of Jefferson's papers published by order of Congress.*

The two apologetic biographies of Jefferson, published successively by Mr. Tucker† and Mr.

* Jefferson's complete Works, New York, 1853–54, 9 vols.

† Life of Jefferson, by George Tucker, London, 1837, 2 vols. [Mr. Tucker, related to the Jeffersons, appears to have written his work, at the request of the family, as an indirect answer to the severe

Randall,* both of which contain very valuable documents.

The works of Hildreth,† John Church Hamilton,‡ Smucker,§ Theodore Dwight,‖ and Henry Lee,¶ from which we learn the nature of the objections taken by Jefferson's opponents to his personal and political conduct.

The able History of the United States by Bancroft;** that of Tucker;†† Curtis's excellent work on the History of the Constitution of the United States;‡‡ the Life of

strictures of Major Henry Lee on Jefferson's conduct. Though writing as an apologist, and obliged in general to succumb to the exigencies of his task, he is often highly candid and just in his appreciations.]

* Life of Jefferson, by Henry Randall, New York, 1858, 3 vols. [This work is not yet in the British Museum. The originals of the extracts cited from it in the French have been obligingly communicated to me by M. de Witt.]

† History of the United States, from the discovery of the continent to the end of the sixteenth Congress, by Richard Hildreth, New York, 1849–52.

‡ History of the Republic of the United States of America, as traced in the writings of Alexander Hamilton and his contemporaries, by John C. Hamilton, New York, 1857, 2 vols.

§ Life of Thomas Jefferson, by Smucker.

‖ Life and Times of Thomas Jefferson, by Theodore Dwight, Boston, 1839.

¶ Observations on the writings of Jefferson, by Henry Lee, Philadelphia, 1839. [This edition is by Major Henry Lee's brother, Mr. C. Carter Lee, who has added some valuable notes. The work is a vindication of General Lee and others from Jefferson's aspersions, and is a most severe analysis of Jefferson's conduct.]

** History of the United States, by George Bancroft, Boston, 7 vols.

†† History of the United States, from their colonisation to the twenty-sixth Congress, in 1841, by George Tucker, Philadelphia, 1857, 4 vols.

‡‡ History of the Constitution of the United States, by George Ticknor Curtis, New York, 1854, 2 vols.

Patrick Henry, by Wirt; * Austin's Life of Gerry; † Washington Irving's Life of Washington; ‡ Loménie's Life of Beaumarchais; § Spark's Biographical Library. ||

The two large collections entitled 'American Archives' and 'American State Papers.'

The writings of Washington, ¶ Franklin, ** Gouverneur Morris, †† Hamilton, ‡‡ John Adams, §§ Jay. ||||

Finally, the correspondence of the Duc de Choiseul, the Count de Vergennes, and M. Genet, access to which, in the archives of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, has been obligingly afforded to me by the kind intervention of the Count de Walewski and M. Thouvenel.

CORNÉLIS DE WITT.

Au Val Richey:
May 1861.

* Life of Patrick Henry, by William Wirt, Philadelphia, 1839.
† Life of Elbridge Gerry, by James Austin, Boston, 1828, 2 vols.
‡ Life of Washington, by Washington Irving, London, 1855–59, 5 vols.
§ Beaumarchais et son Temps, par M. de Loménie, 2 vols.
|| Spark's American Biography, Boston, 1839–48, 25 vols.
¶ Life and Writings of Washington, Boston, 1837, 12 vols.
** Life and Works of Benjamin Franklin, Boston, 1840, 10 vols.
†† Life and Writings of Gouverneur Morris, Boston, 1832, 3 vols.
‡‡ Works of Alexander Hamilton, New York, 1851, 7 vols.
§§ Life and Works of John Adams, Boston, 1851, 10 vols.
|||| Life and Writings of John Jay, New York, 1832, 2 vols.



TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE author of the work of which I offer a translation calls it a study. It really is such; and it was because, on reading, I found it answer to its title — partly, too, in consequence of a personal interest in the subject — that I asked and obtained M. de Witt's obliging permission to translate it.

The information it contains is both interesting and important, and will be novel to all those who have not more than the usual acquaintance with the chief actors and phases of the American Revolution; those, for instance, who are not familiar with the able and courageous work of Hildreth, and that of Bancroft, as far as it has yet appeared. And even to those who may have this advantage, the pains which M. de Witt has taken to make such of the eminent persons as come within the scope of his work speak as much as possible in their own words, and illustrate their own views, together with his own judicious reflections on the different points as they arise, will perhaps convey a still clearer and more precise conception of the subject than they previously entertained.

It is high time that there should be an exacter and



more trustworthy knowledge of the real character of the American Revolution, and of the actors, events, and motives which led to the foundation of the American republic, than now exists. As yet it is but singularly incomplete, and densely clouded by misconceptions; and this where it might be least expected. Happening some little time since to say to a distinguished French friend of mine (himself an eminent historian), that the day of the Declaration of Independence was anything but a day of jubilee, and that the Americans had reluctantly broken off their connection with England, he rather defiantly replied, 'I should require very good proof of that!' He may find it in this study. Again, in the letters of special correspondents since the breaking out of the civil war, the name of 'Hamilton,' as that of some eminent person, has occasionally been mentioned; and I have been more than once asked by well-informed people, 'Who was Hamilton?' They, too, will be benefited by this study. Their ignorance is not at all remarkable, when we come to know that in that invaluable and most comprehensive work the 'Biographie Universelle' — that vast collection of actors and writers, great and small — the name of Hamilton does not appear. As far as this copious work is concerned, posterity would never hear a whisper of the 'gifted young West Indian;' the boy-orator, exciting the enthusiasm of a public meeting in New York at seventeen; the boy-publicist, vigorously and with manly power defending Congress at eighteen; the captain of a volunteer company of artillery, in active service, at nineteen, attracting the

notice of his chief, and presently receiving from him the appointment of Military Secretary, with the rank of colonel; the trusted counsellor of that chief (Washington), a member of his Cabinet, and Secretary of the Treasury during his first administration; the bold restorer of public credit, under that federal constitution which he was a principal instrument, first, in framing, and afterwards, in explaining and recommending, in a work of marvellous ability ('The Federalist'), to the acceptance of the American people, by no means universally inclined to receive it; then an eminent and eloquent lawyer; and, finally, the person whom Washington, when once again summoned to command the armies of his country roused to indignation by the aggressive policy of France, *insisted* upon having for his second-in-command. These certainly are titles enough to notice; and the omission of such a name in such a work is, I should imagine, a fact unparalleled in literary history. In England he has not been more fortunate. We can hardly require stronger evidence of the extreme carelessness with which the political history of the United States has been treated in Europe.

With Jefferson, the case is somewhat different; though little really known, he has been very much talked of. He has, indeed, fared, on the whole, worse than Hamilton. He has not been ignored, like the latter, nor has his fame been for a while eclipsed, in his own country; on the contrary, it has ruled it like a spell. But the distinction between them is this: Hamilton, for a while lost to history, has yet to re-appear, and is re-appearing, in his real and great proportions;



while Jefferson, having undergone that magnifying process by which a reputation is transferred from history to romance, is now undergoing that diminishing process by which it is re-transferred from romance to history. The renown of Hamilton has to be aggrandized; that of Jefferson is fated to be dwarfed.

But great is the power of myth. There is, of course, a struggle to maintain it. Either from habitual submission to received opinions, or what is more probable, from some necessity of caressing the national fable, even so able an historian as Mr. Bancroft cannot emancipate himself entirely from it. As this writer has most unfortunately dropped all reference to his authorities, just when they are most required, it is impossible to divine from what quarries he hopes to get the spotless marble from which he seems inclined to work out the old colossal Jefferson. But of two things, one: either the citations in this book are a tissue of forgeries and garbled extracts, or Mr. Bancroft's description of Jefferson is empty declamation—mere stage-tradition. Fine writing has its advantages, but also its perils, and one of these is a tendency to betray the mind into a debauch of words. It is, I trust, under the influence of this sweet intoxication that Mr. Bancroft tells us, among other things in his florid description, 'that it was a beautiful trait of Jefferson's character, that he was free from envy.' Why, to ignore Jefferson's envy is to ignore a most important clue to the history of the times, to overlook entirely the initiative of those bitter party-feuds which broke out even under Washington's presidency, and to pass unnoticed the impelling cause

of that disastrous hatred of England, which, beyond all question, has been the bane and corruption of America. The very process by which he endeavoured to lessen the almost sublime influence of Washington, to bring under suspicion the splendid abilities of Hamilton, is illustrative of its origin, for having neither the open courage of conviction, nor the bluff violence of fanaticism — though a partial and temporary political fanaticism there may for a moment have been — it at once suggests that lower and more timid passion which works by stealth, and undermines in order to destroy.

The results of his envy have been most formidable. To attain his ends, Jefferson, through his friends, got up a cry of 'the republic in danger.' But the cry by itself would have been absurd, and here was the mischief. To convert it into a poison, it was necessary to mix with it some noxious ingredients; for to charge anyone with desiring to overthrow the republic, was to charge him with desiring to compass an impossibility. Monarchy had not been cashiered in America as a bad thing, but superseded because it was an impracticable thing. To dis-crown and dis-coronet the British constitution, in order to adjust it as far as possible to American wants, was a supreme necessity; to re-crown and re-coronet it, after such adjustment, would have been a sheer impossibility. But let us hear Mr. Bancroft: 'The insurgents, as they took up self-government, manifested no impatience at the recollection of having been ruled by a royal line — no eagerness to blot out the memories of a former state;' in a word, to supersede



monarchy, most interesting evidence of which will be found in this work. In fact, as the same historian observes, 'The republic was, to America, a god-send; it came, though unsought, *because society contained the elements of no other organization.*' Jefferson, of course, knew this perfectly well. To call men monarchists was to revive no old hate, to grate on no old prejudices, to re-animate no extinct parties, to resuscitate no suspended fears. So, with a petty craft which is very characteristic, he drops the word 'monarchist,' and substitutes for it a word of his own introduction or invention, '*monocrat*,' which though etymologically the same thing, yet, being less understood, might for that reason more easily pass with the mass for meaning something worse. But, even when tricked out in this way, the charge of monarchism would not have been sufficient of a bugbear. He was, therefore, obliged to conjoin with it another term, not in any way connected with it, in order to endow it with a full capacity of exciting odium and alarm. To blacken the men who were in his way, he called them not only 'monocrats' but '*Anglomen.*' He charged them not only with wishing to substitute monocracy for republicanism, but he also insinuated that their preference of the monocratic form was synonymous with the desire to re-import and re-impose British supremacy; he took for his war-cry some supposed subservience to England for some undefined purpose, and to give asperity to the charge, it became necessary to foster and develope a furious enmity against England herself, and to this he devoted himself with untiring zeal and fatal success.

The times favoured him. American independence had been effected without leaving behind it any very malignant feeling against Great Britain, though it is probable Mr. Bancroft somewhat overstates the case when, in order to illustrate the superior magnanimity of republicans, he says 'that no rankling discontent survived.' Still there might be no ill-will of any serious amount. But, fortunately for Jefferson's future necessities, the French revolution broke out. Its dawn as pure and brilliant as its setting was dark and stormy, it touched the hearts of nations, and especially kindled the sympathies of the Americans. They might well suppose that their example had not been without influence on its developement, and even look upon La Fayette as the electric wire that had conveyed the passion for liberty into the heart of France. They naturally made the cause of the French revolution their own, and when they saw the kingdoms of Europe arrayed against it, their sympathies became so fully aroused, that the passions of France became their passions, and its enmities their enmities. It was on this chord that Jefferson skilfully and incessantly touched. In his letters and conversations, in articles in the newspapers under his command, through every channel at his disposal, he was perpetually inciting his countrymen to a more and more vehement devotion to France, and to a more and more passionate hostility to England. In vain did Hamilton, early prescient of the coming chaos, and, with his sensitive love of liberty, horror-struck at the crimes he had foreseen, and were now being 'committed in her name,' endeavour to recall the nation to moderation and good

sense. The match was not equal. The appeal to reason gave way before the stimulus to the passions. Under the careful culture of Jefferson, the masses in America became almost servile in their submission to France, and frantic in their hatred of England. The result was most disastrous. The American war in 1812 was a direct and overmastering consequence of this anti-English feeling, which for the purpose of party warfare had been so insanely instilled, and tended still more to embitter this mad and mischievous antipathy. But there was another consequence far more serious than this.

A respect and regard for England, a generous and just appreciation of her services in the cause of freedom, a noble emulation to vie with her in exhibiting free institutions to the best advantage, would not only have conferred immense benefits upon the world, but would have exercised a conservative and ennobling effect on American liberty itself. Of these invaluable results she has been deprived, mainly by the odious policy of Jefferson. I do not say entirely by that, because I may not forget the hordes of Irish, trained up by *Christian* priests to a sanguinary hatred of England, and the hordes of Germans, escaping from political insignificance or oppression, which have found their way into the Union, and become suddenly invested with a fullness of political power of which they comprehend neither the duties nor the dignity. For this Jefferson is not responsible, but what he is responsible for, and what has been the greatest disaster to America, is, that all the statesmen of his school — that is, nearly all the statesmen who have directed the

Union—are precisely those who have been eager not to suppress and extirpate the animosity and political exaggeration distinguishing the new imports, but rather to develope and make use of them to the utmost. Hence that vulgar and unenlightened democracy which is now festering into despotism, and that patronised hatred of England which at this moment presents such a hideous mixture of idiotcy and madness.*

What a melancholy spectacle was that which was exhibited at Paris something more than a year since, when, under the auspices of that notorious personage, Mr. Cassius Clay, the American residents in Paris met to make their protest against the then recent act of secession. That bad feeling towards England should manifest itself at such a meeting was a thing of course; but that, as reported of them, they should pass a resolution attributing the fault to England, and calling upon the Emperor of the French to make common cause with the North, and receive in return its aid to enable him to avenge St. Helena, almost surpasses belief. Why even their great apostle, Jefferson, would have denounced

* There is, unhappily, another reason. I speak not only my own opinion, but also that of men best qualified to know and judge, when I say that this country, by its long policy of forbearance, is, in some degree, responsible for that arrogant aggressive spirit, and that recklessness of consequences in America, which would have been the scorn and horror of the men who led her to independence and empire. Had England long since given the Americans grave reasons for self-restraint, the actual madness might never have broken out. Yet such is the spell of this fatal policy, that even now, regardless of her honour and future reputation, she will not put on record that she made one single attempt at mediation for the purpose of terminating this fratricidal war.



them. It is true that he had once looked forward to the pleasure of dining at Dumouriez's head-quarters in London; but, at all events, the French were then republicans, and seemed to have some yearning for liberty; but what would have been his disgust at hearing any of his countrymen recommending a crusade against England to avenge the fate of a man whom he called the 'modern Attila'—of whom, to his credit be it spoken, he had a supreme horror, and for whom no punishment, in his estimation, could have been too bad. Now the men who held this detestable language could not, it is fairly to be presumed, have belonged to the scum of their country, were far away from the whirl of local excitement, and under no pressure of any sort. But if such be the respect for liberty among men with their social advantages, what must be the case with the unsifted mass!

The Jeffersonized American people have been in the habit of considering themselves as the unrivalled lovers of freedom. Yet it is but little intelligible how any men who systematically, and on principle, hate England, can have any great respect for liberty; it is a fair test by which to try men. We must suspect those to be no real worshippers of the god, the passion of whose life it is to destroy the faithful sentinel that guards his shrine. England is such a sentinel; has proved herself such. The only one of the great leading nations of Europe that is free, the protectress and shield of the smaller nations that are so, she ought naturally to command the sympathies, most certainly the forbearance, of all to whom freedom is dear. To such men the advice given to England by Burke, when

pleading the cause of America, ought, one would think, to suggest itself spontaneously as the rule which — as men free, or desiring to be free — should regulate their conduct towards England :—

> Be to her faults a little blind,
> Be to her virtues very kind.

But when, on the contrary, we find her faults intensely magnified, and her virtues maliciously ignored, when we find her obstructed, vilified, and as far as can be done with impunity, bullied and humiliated by men who chatter about their love of liberty, it is manifest they dupe themselves, or are trying to dupe others.

England, it is true, is a monarchy, and this, no doubt, is an unpardonable sin in the eyes of numbers. No doubt there are thousands, millions even, to whom mere belief in republicanism is a kind of political justification by faith alone, superseding the necessity of works. No doubt there are political pedants so enamoured of a name, that they would fret at being subjects of a monarchy administered in the best spirit of a republic, and glorify themselves on being citizens of a republic administered in the worst spirit of a monarchy. Like the dying Italian artist who scornfully rejected the supreme rites of his Church because the crucifix presented to him violated the rules of art, such men will turn away from liberty herself when, instead of a Phrygian cap, she wears a crown. But such is not the stuff of which genuine freemen are made. The immense majority of American republicans are of this stamp ; so, it is to be feared, is a large proportion of French republicans. The Italian republicans have of late shown themselves superior to



this word-worship. In England, among persons whose opinions are known, and who have the name of America for ever on their lips, there is said to be one of this class. It is unnecessary I should indicate him by name, though I should like to invite him to condescend to quit the region of myth, and inspect the reality as far as it can be represented to him, within the limits of this admirable study.*

When this work was written, the American Union was in vigorous existence, and seemed to give promise of a long and splendid career. Before it was published, that Union had virtually ceased to exist. I trust it will be conceded that I have a painful right to put my opinion on record respecting this terrible, I cannot call it wholly unexpected, catastrophe. Connected, by blood and family ties, with men who perilled everything which society esteems valuable, in defence of their country's rights, and who were afterwards more or less prominent in framing and establishing her Union, I must necessarily feel indignant at those who have wantonly marred and obliterated their glorious work. These men were of the North ; I was myself—though I have preferred, from my boyhood, freer England to free America, and my right of being a British subject to that of being an American citizen—born in the North. I was old enough, moreover, in 1812, to

* I have heard Mr. Cobden spoken of in this way, but I do not believe that he is ashamed of English liberty, or English institutions; indeed, could he be open to any suspicion, it would be that of disliking liberty of any kind, coming forward so oddly as he does at times to prove England hysterical, and France benign.

share the indignation of those around me at the infamous conduct of the South in bringing on the war, and to sympathise with the secessionist spirit of the Eastern States; and I have been informed lately, on high American authority, that, claims which, in common with many in the North, I had on the United States, and which, after an infamous delay, twice acknowledged by Congress, have been as often vetoed, were thus disposed of by Presidents influenced and directed by the antipathy of the South to the North.

These surely are strong reasons for a decided bias on my part against the South, and since it is impossible to speak on this matter without being accused of bias, I thus avow what was mine. Nevertheless, after a not inattentive observation of the course of things for years, it is my deep conviction that the terrible responsibility and guilt of this great convulsion, which has defeated a noble experiment of the highest value to the interests of humanity, rest on the head of the North. Upwards of twenty years ago, in an English periodical in Paris, in answer to some strictures of the 'Journal des Débats,' as well as to the exaggerations of some raving abolitionist, I endeavoured to show that the Northern States were even at that time violating the spirit of the federal compact; that the abolition policy, as far as it was sincere, was, in the way it manifested itself, a mischievous, unjust, and unscrupulous benevolence, which could not fail to bring disaster in its train; and that such a restive and unreasoning benevolence, operating in the same spirit, in no matter what society, against the evils endured and the wrongs committed in it, would not only encounter the fiercest opposition, but give rise to



convulsions of the most formidable character. But as is now patent to everybody, the abolition movement was a mere cloak to reduce the South to political insignificance. For such reasons my sympathies, in spite of many a prejudice, have been enlisted on the side of the Southern people. I look upon them as men contending for their constitutionally accorded rights; and were I to blame them, I must blame those whom I revere, and who, on much subtler grounds, and after infinitely less preliminary exasperation, worked in field and cabinet to break off their connection with that mother-country to which they were warmly and honestly attached. Respect alone for their memory and example would require that I should wish success to the Southern cause, enthusiastically cheer its triumph, or deeply lament over its defeat. But that defeat I do not apprehend. Were it possible for the words of wisdom to steady the whirl of the Northern brain, the language of Burke when endeavouring in vain to preserve America to England, applicable word for word to this mad attempt to coerce the South into submission, might recall it to composure and common sense. 'You may subdue for a moment,' says the eloquent statesman, 'but it does not remove the necessity of subduing again; and a nation is not governed, that is perpetually to be conquered.' A Union based on enforced concord is a contradiction in terms.

THE TRANSLATOR.

N.B. For the occasional notes in *brackets* the translator is entirely responsible.

July 10, 1862.

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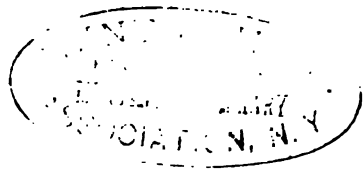
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THOMAS JEFFERSON

CHAPTER I.

WHAT THE AMERICAN RADICALS THINK OF JEFFERSON — WHAT HE WAS — HIS BIRTH — HIS EDUCATION — MISS Αδνιλεϐ — JEFFERSON REFUSED AND SATISFIED — HIS SYSTEMATIC OPTIMISM — HIS ENCYCLOPÆDIC TASTES — THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY IN AMERICA.

WASHINGTON achieved national independence and founded the federal government; Jefferson introduced into the working of this government the doctrine of state rights, and the preponderating influence of democratic principles. Washington defeated England, and extricated the United States from impotence and anarchy; Jefferson overthrew the federalist party, and rooted out from his country every germ of centralisation and monarchy. Washington effected the revolution of 1776 and that of 1789; Jefferson that of 1801.* Such, if I mistake not, is the way in which Americans in general distinguish the special services

* What is understood in America by the *Revolution of* 1776, is the emancipation of the colonies; by the *Revolution of* 1789, the bringing into operation of the actual Constitution of the United States (see Hamilton's Works, vol. v. p. 406); by the *Revolution of* 1801, the final triumph of the Democratic party.

of the two men whose names and examples are the most frequently appealed to in the United States.

While disclaiming the merit of having accomplished so many great things 'single-handed,' * Jefferson was fond of representing his accession to the presidency in 1801 'as a pacific revolution, as real as that of 1776, a revolution not of form but of principles, which rescued the vessel of the state from the monarchial current into which it had been steered, while the people slept, by a faction of *energumeni* and Anglo-men, royalists and aristocrats, and brought it back to its natural current, the republican and democratic current.'† To have expelled the friends of Washington from power, to have given free issue to the passions which Washington had endeavoured to restrain, this it was that Jefferson, having one more favour to ask of his fellow-citizens before he died, pressed upon them as his highest claim to the gratitude of the nation.‡ This, however, was not the last thing he had to say touching his services to his country. He had, possibly, meanwhile become himself aware that to have hurried the United States down that political slope to which they naturally incline, was not an achievement likely to appear either very original, or very glorious in the eyes of impartial and reasonable men, and it was no doubt for the purpose of presenting himself before posterity with less questionable and less compromising claims, that

* Jefferson's Works, vol. vii. p. 255; Letter to Wm. T. Barry, July 2, 1822.

† Ibid. vol. iv. pp. 139, 198, 375; vol. vii. pp. 133, 154; vol. ix. pp. 88, 97, 507, 508.

‡ In February 1826, when he prayed the Legislature of Virginia for permission to sell his property by lottery. Ibid. vol. ix. pp. 507, 508; *Thoughts on Lotteries.*

he composed the following inscription for his own tomb:*

HERE LIES BURIED
THOMAS JEFFERSON,
AUTHOR OF THE DECLARATION OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE,
OF THE STATUTE OF VIRGINIA FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM,
AND FATHER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA.

Many high employments, and many important acts, are designedly omitted in this epitaph, which has reference to the two extremes only of a protracted and prosperous career. In this attempt to retrace the life of Jefferson, and the part he played, we shall see him appear successively as a radical reformer of the still aristocratic constitution of Virginia, and as governor of the State; as minister from Congress to France at the time of the fall of the old régime, and as a sagacious counsellor of the French revolutionists — even while, under the influence of their example, he was abandoning himself to the wildest speculations; as Secretary of State under Washington's presidency; as Vice-president under that of John Adams; as the chief of a factious opposition to the government of which he was a leading and most distinguished member; as twice President, and contriving so dexterously to use his power for the furtherance of his views, and the triumph of his party, as to be able to transmit it unimpaired to one of his chief political instruments;† then as retiring to his country seat of Monticello, there to live to the age of eighty, surrounded by the respect of new-born generations, and there to die, leaving his family in want. Such, in substance, was the career of this singular man:

* Tucker's Life of Jefferson, vol. ii. p. 553.

[† Madison, who succeeded him in the presidency.]



a politician as able in action as he was wild in speculation; a freethinker of the eighteenth century who succeeded in making himself the idol of an Anglo-Saxon and Christian nation; the sagacious head of a commonwealth, and a moralist not without elevation of sentiment, who has nevertheless expressed his inward convictions, both political and religious, in these terms: 'The only point on which he (General Washington) and I differed in opinion was, that I had more confidence than he had in the natural integrity and discretion of the people . . . . It is not to be understood that I am with Him (Christ) in all his doctrines. I am a materialist, he takes the side of spiritualism.' *

On April 2, 1743, thirty-seven years after the birth of Franklin, and eleven years after that of Washington, Thomas Jefferson was born in Virginia, in the rustic dwelling of a planter on the frontier of civilisation, and in the wild and hilly country of the county of Goochland, where his father had been one of the earliest settlers. Peter Jefferson was an extensive landholder, whose family, originally Welsh, had for a long time been American in habits and manners. Peter was an enterprising colonist, of sound judgement, resolute character, and an active and enquiring turn of mind, who had by reading repaired the defects of a too rudimentary education, and who was sufficiently alive to the advantages of knowledge to have his son taught Greek and Latin by his neighbour, a minister of the Scotch church. He died in the prime of life, leaving a widow and seven children, the eldest of whom, Thomas, was only thirteen. The illustrious head of the democratic party in the United States has taken care to tell

* Jefferson's Works, vol. vi. p. 97; vol. vii. p. 156.

us that his mother was a Randolph, a family of consideration in Virginia, the members of which 'trace their pedigree far back in England and Scotland.'* This is the only detail he gives us touching his mother; then, as if to excuse himself for this passing reference to his aristocratic origin, he adds with an air of easy indifference, which must appear to certain of his partisans as being in itself the mark of a superior mind, 'to this let every one ascribe the faith and merit he chooses.'†

In his seventeenth year, Thomas Jefferson was sent to Williamsburg to complete his classical education at William and Mary College. He was at that time a tall raw-boned youth, with red hair and freckled face, marked, and rather harsh features, a confident manner, a sprightly and shrewd expression, and already a sufficiently good tactician to be able to set on his schoolfellows to obtain favours from his teachers which it did not suit him to solicit directly for himself; but on the whole a good fellow, well-tempered, agreeable, and ever ready for those little adventures which delight young men, and are a source of popularity among them; by no means backward in his attention to the fair sex; an eager sportsman, a good rider, and never refusing to enliven a party with his violin, on which, so say his panegyrists, he was a skilful performer.

John Page, who a few years later contested the governorship of the State with him, but without any interruption of their intimacy, was, at the period we are speaking of, the bosom friend and confidant, to whom he revealed his joys and sorrows. Jefferson was in the habit of writing long letters to him filled with everything

* Jefferson's Works, vol. i. p. 1; *Autobiography.*

† Ibid.



that came into his head, displaying that medley of burlesque and pedantry which school-boys so much affect; now jesting in a vein of pleasantry, impertinent rather than licentious, about his female friends at Williamsburg, to whom he made no scruple of sending messages, asking them for garters embroidered expressly for him, or for news of their admirers, now falling foul in no very reverential tone of the devil and Job, of his teachers and his studies; already a free-thinker, from a craving to show his spirit, but mindful like Job of the pious lessons of his mother, whenever some passing sorrow threw him into a grave and thoughtful mood; for he had his sorrows like all those who love without the assurance that their love is returned.

On leaving college, at the age of twenty, he paid attentions to a young lady, Rebecca Burwell, whom, in order to mislead the inquisitive, and give himself the pleasure of a little mystery, he designated in his letters to Page, sometimes by the name of Belinda, sometimes by an inversion of the letters of that name written in Greek characters, Αδνιλεϑ, sometimes by latinising it into a bad pun, Campana-in-die (Bell-in-day). Miss Belinda, on the whole, was considerably a coquette, for she allowed Jefferson to have her portrait, though she would not favour his suit. According to his own account, his attentions to this beloved portrait had more of passion in them than delicacy. One night he placed it near his bedside; on waking he found everything upside down in his room. 'I am sure if there be such a thing as a devil in the world, he must have been here last night, and have had some hand in contriving what happened to me.'* In fact

* Tucker's Life of Jefferson, vol. i. p. 24; Letter to Page, Dec. 25, 1762.

the rats had gnawed his pocket-book, carried off his choicest garters, and devoured half-a-dozen of his favourite minuets; the rain had forced its way into his room, a pool had formed round his watch, which 'had lost its speech,' * and as a climax to his troubles, the portrait of Belinda was saturated with water: in his anxiety to dry it, he tore it.

'This,' I cried, 'was the last stroke Satan had in reserve for me: he knew I cared not for anything else he could do to me, and was determined to try this last most fatal expedient. *Multis fortunæ vulneribus percussus, huic uni me imparem sensi, et penitus succubui.* I would have cried bitterly, but I thought it beneath the dignity of a man — and a man, too, who had read *τῶν ὄντων, τὰ μὲν ἐφ' ἡμῖν, τὰ δ' οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν.* And now, although the picture be defaced, there is so lively an image of her imprinted on my mind, that I shall think of her too often, I fear, for my peace of mind; and too often, I am sure, to get through old Coke this winter: for God knows I have not seen him since I packed him up in my trunk in Williamsburg. Well, Page, I do wish the Devil had old Coke, for I am sure I was never so tired of a dull old scoundrel in my life. What! are there so few inquietudes tacked to this momentary life of ours, that we must need be loading it with a thousand more? Or, as brother Job says (who, by the by, I think, began to whine a little under his afflictions), "*Are not my days few? Cease then, that I may take comfort a little before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness, and the shadow of death.*" . . . But the old fellow says we must read to gain knowledge, and gain knowledge to make us happy and admired. Mere jargon! Is there any such thing as happiness in this world? No. And as for admiration, I am sure the man who powders most, perfumes most, embroiders most, and talks most nonsense, is most admired.'†

* Tucker's Life of Jefferson, vol. i. p. 25.

† Ibid. vol. i. p. 26.



In spite of his passion the young sceptic sometimes went so far as to profess to put as little faith in love as in happiness and admiration.

'Have you any inclination to travel, Page? because, if you have, I shall be glad of your company. . . . I intend to hoist sail and away. I shall visit particularly England, Holland, France, Spain, Italy (where I would buy me a good fiddle), and Egypt, and return through the British provinces to the northward, home. This, to be sure, would take us two or three years, and if we should not both be cured of love in that time, I think the devil would be in it.'*

All this fine philosophy, however, did not prevent his being greatly tormented, envying Page, 'whose heart was then free;' swearing 'if Belinda will not accept of my service it shall never be offered to another,' and preparing pretty forms of declaration, 'very touching, which, in spite of numerous rehearsals, would end in nothing but a few confused phrases in the midst of a ball.'† With time, however, he gets round a little; then follow explanations with the young lady, rather less misty, in which he shows himself strangely intent on carrying out his plan of visiting Europe, on not binding himself by any engagement to Belinda's guardian, on reconciling his covert proceedings with propriety, and on silencing certain honourable scruples at not having urged his suit, 'according to form.'

'I asked her guardian no question which would admit of a categorical answer; but I assured *αδνιλεβ* that such questions would one day be asked. He is satisfied that I shall make him an offer, and if he intends to accept of it, he will disregard those made by others. My fate depends on *αδνιλεβ*'s present resolutions—by them I must stand or fall.'‡

* Tucker's Life of Jefferson, vol. i. p. 34. † Ibid. p. 35. ‡ Ibid. p. 37.

He 'fell' without knowing why or wherefore, but the event had been a long while foreseen, and he had beforehand come to the decision not to take his disappointment too much to heart.

'But the event at last must be this — that if she consents, I shall be happy; if she does not, I must *endeavour* to be as much so as possible. . . The most fortunate of us, in our journey through life, frequently meet with calamities and misfortunes which may greatly afflict us; and, to fortify our minds against the attacks of these calamities and misfortunes, should be one of the principal studies and endeavours of our lives. The only method of doing this is to assume a perfect resignation to the Divine will; to consider that, whatever does happen, must happen; and that, by our uneasiness, we cannot prevent the blow before it does fall, but we may add to its force after it has fallen. These considerations, and others such as these, may enable us in some measure to surmount the difficulties thrown in our way; to bear up with a tolerable degree of patience under this burthen of life; and to proceed with a pious and unshaken resignation, till we arrive at our journey's end, when we may deliver up our trust into the hands of Him who gave it, and receive such reward as to Him shall seem proportioned to our merit.'*

Singular medley of frivolity and devotion! I readily conceive Jefferson's finding himself but little 'embarrassed by his solemn principles.' In his mouth these devout formulas have a little too much the air of a receipt for the prevention of low spirits and anxiety. He was an optimist by temperament and system, and fifty years after he had forgotten Rebecca Burwell, he was as much as ever in the mind to live content and happy, but without feeling himself under the same necessity of appealing to religious sentiments to confirm him in his purpose. He wrote to John Adams in 1816, 'You ask if I would agree to live my seventy

* Tucker's Life of Jefferson, vol. i. pp. 29, 30, 34, 35, 36.

or rather seventy-three years over again? To which I say, yea. I think with you, that it is a good world on the whole; that it has been framed on a principle of benevolence, and more pleasure than pain dealt out to us. There are, indeed (who might say nay) gloomy and hypochondriac minds, inhabitants of diseased bodies, disgusted with the present, and despairing of the future; always counting that the worst will happen, because it may happen. To these I say, how much pain have cost us the evils which have never happened.* My temperament is sanguine: I steer my bark, with hope in the head, leaving fear astern. My hopes, indeed, sometimes fail; but not oftener than the forebodings of the gloomy.' †

In this eager confidence in the future which breeds contempt of danger, because it screens it from our sight, but which must not be confounded with courage, though sometimes serving in lieu of it, lay the secret of Jefferson's strength, as well as of his weakness. The youthful ardour which still continued to glow within him to the close of his career, impelled him at the age of twenty to devote himself to the study of law, history, and philosophy, of mathematics, physic, and natural history, of literature and the fine arts, with that encyclopædic spirit of investigation which is ambitious enough to desire to overstep the limits that God has assigned to human knowledge, and which, nevertheless, is too impatient even to reach them.

[* Possibly he had in his mind an old French quatrain on a lady subject to vapours, of which here is a version —

They never came, those ills so sad,
You fear'd with direful scourge would vex you;
But, ah! how sore they did perplex you,
Those ills which you have never had.]

† Jefferson's Works, vol. vi. p. 575.

This natural taste for intellectual enjoyment and adventure found early nurture in the lessons of Dr. Small, a learned Scotch professor in the University of Williamsburg, and in the conversation of Fauquier,* the governor of Virginia, to whom the young student had recommended himself by that combination of seriousness with levity, so much in request during the eighteenth century among the higher classes. Fauquier was a man of the world, a libertine in conduct and principle, who had set the example to the small circle admitted to his palace, of imitating the jeering impiety and loose morals, the literary tastes and polished manners of Shaftesbury and Bolingbroke. Page's light-hearted correspondent would be naturally more captivated than repelled by the licentious gaiety of this amiable personage, who was looked up to by the best society in Virginia as a model of politeness and elegance. But while preserving himself better than some others from the vices of his patron, Jefferson seems to have profited by the more brilliant points of his character, if we may judge by the reputation he always had among his countrymen of being a man of good-breeding, and of possessing the art of shining in society. It is more than probable, however, that to so knowing a person as Fauquier, the occasional enthusiastic outbursts of his pupil's dilettanteism must have appeared rather raw and antiquated, and as sadly smacking of a provincial training. We can easily conceive how difficult, in spite of all his urbanity, he would find it to restrain a smile on reading the letter, which Jefferson, 'emboldened by old social relations,' wrote to a certain Mr. Macpherson, no doubt a relation

* Jefferson's Works, vol. vi. p. 411 ; Letter to Girardin, Jan. 15, 1815.



of the clever mystifier, who, a few years before, had been convicted in England of passing off his own poetry for that of Ossian. 'The poems of Ossian,' he says, 'have ever been and will be throughout my life a source of elevated and daily enjoyment. The tender and sublime emotions of the mind have never attained under the hand of man to such a degree of elevation. I confess without scruple that in my eyes the rude bard of the north is the greatest poet that ever existed. For nothing but the pleasure of reading his works, do I wish to learn the language in which he sung, and to possess his songs in the original form.' He goes on to request him to prevail on Mr. Macpherson to allow him to have a copy in manuscript of one of the originals in his possession, adding, 'I would choose it in a fair round hand, on fine paper, with a good margin, bound in parchments as elegantly as possible, lettered on the back, and marbled or gilt on the edges of the leaves. I would not regard expense in doing this . . . . . The glow of one warm thought is to me worth more than money.'*

But there was no affectation in this display of sentiment, arising as it did from a love of literature; and though, at a later period, we find him a little more intent on obtaining the enjoyment of art on cheaper terms, the explanation is that the war of independence was going on, and that in such critical times, it is necessary either to dispense with the gratification of too costly fancies, or to devise ingenious expedients for obtaining the means of indulging them. Wishing to get up concerts at his house on an economical scale, he imagined a process which would certainly have never suggested itself to any European head.

* Jefferson's Works, vol. i. p. 195; Feb. 25, 1773.

'If there is a gratification which I envy any people in this world, it is to your country its music. This is the favourite passion of my soul, and fortune has cast my lot in a country where it is in a state of deplorable barbarism. . . . . The bounds of an American fortune will not admit the indulgence of a domestic band of musicians, yet I have thought that a passion for music might be reconciled with that economy which we are obliged to observe. I retain among my domestic servants a gardener, a weaver, a cabinet-maker, and a stone-cutter; to which I would add a *vigneron*. In a country where, like yours, music is cultivated and practised by every class of men, I suppose there might be found persons of these trades who could perform on the French horn, clarionet, or hautboy and bassoon — so that one might have a band of two French horns, two clarionets, two hautboys, and a bassoon, without enlarging their domestic expenses.'*

A droll notion certainly; conceivable only in a state of 'barbarism,' but inspired nevertheless by a refined need of the enjoyment derivable from the fine arts, which was in perfect keeping with the tastes and tendencies of good society in the last century. Jefferson sees Europe only at a distance. In spite of his desire to imitate it, he does not keep pace with events, nor is he accurately informed of what is going on; but he follows the general current on which the mind of the old world is drifting; the philosophical breathings of the age kindle and animate him. Hence that passion for science, art, and literature, that rapacious and superficial curiosity, that rather presumptuous confidence in the intellectual power of man, all those peculiarities which give him a distinctive character amid the Virginian planters around him — active-minded, enterprising, intelligent and straightforward men, but prudent, simple, practical, attached to old traditions, religious

* Jefferson's Works, vol. i. p. 209.



from habit, but without any notable fervour, and whose independence and resolution were exclusively employed in defending the rights of the colonies against the mother-country and extending the conquests of man over the desert.

Jefferson, however, was far from being an isolated phenomenon in America. In almost all the English colonies, the house of the Royal Governor, previous to the revolution, was the centre of a small polished and cultivated society, composed of lawyers, professors, magistrates, and high functionaries, all more or less anxious to be on a par with the educated classes of the old country, and all more or less affected by the ideas and tendencies of the time. The greater portion of the leading class kept themselves aloof from any direct participation in their pretensions, but became insensibly influenced by their conversation, their writings, their speeches, and thus, through their action, minds were enlarged and manners refined—on every side sprang up those sentiments of tolerance and humanity, which the materialist philosophers of the eighteenth century certainly did not invent, but which it is their glory to have popularised amid Christian peoples who had too long overlooked what is the real and full import of the idea of charity.

In the seventeenth century the Puritans of Massachusetts coming to America in search of a refuge from the persecutions of the Established Church, in their turn forced the state of Rhode Island into existence by their religious proscriptions; banished Catholics and Baptists, hung Quakers and witches, exterminated Indians, as things accursed, 'like Canaanites and Amalekites,' and condemned prisoners of war to perpetual slavery. The charter of Rhode Island proclaimed the

most absolute liberty of religious belief, and the law withheld this privilege from Papists; the law compelled the owners of slaves to free them after ten years of servitude, and public feeling prevented its execution. The Catholics, for whom Maryland had for a long time been the only asylum in the British Empire, established the principle of religious liberty 'in favour of all who believed in Jesus Christ;' and the Protestants, gradually becoming masters of the country, unscrupulously disregarded it. The Anglicans of Virginia closed the door of the colonies against Nonconformists, and punished such of their members as ventured to harbour them. The Quakers of Pennsylvania, alone, granted without restriction to others the religious privileges they claimed for themselves. Almost universally in America the rights of conscience had no other assertors than oppressed minorities, and even in the colonies whence the cry for abolition was one day to issue, the protests of a few generous hearts against slavery remained without an echo.

In the eighteenth century, the legislature of Massachusetts passed acts for indemnifying the descendants of the Quakers and reputed sorcerers who had been put to death; it relieved Quakers and Baptists from the payment of ecclesiastical dues, prohibited the importation of slaves of Indian blood, and had a dispute with the Governor of the State on the question of capital punishment, which it refused to apply to forgery. On several occasions the Boston juries recognised a right in the slave to exact wages from his master. In spite of prohibitory laws, the Catholics of Maryland openly celebrated their religious worship, and more than one half of the population of Virginia, notwithstanding the supremacy of the Anglican Church, were dissenters.



Throughout America, the rights of conscience were now respected, if not recognised; and even in those colonies, which, in our day, still angrily resist the efforts of the abolitionists, the abolition of slavery had its advocates.

The remote influence of the philosophical ideas of the time had not of itself effected this transformation. The natural progress of intelligence, the spontaneous developement of the charitable feelings, which, even amidst the religious acerbity of an earlier period, were germinating in a few chosen minds, had their part in the change. Religion had combined with philosophy to bring it about; religious feeling had appropriated to itself the principles which modern moralists had borrowed from Christianity while in the act of assailing it; had gratified aspirations of a generous type, and had not, as elsewhere, endeavoured to crush ideas of tolerance and humanity, under the pretext that those who advocated them were enemies of the faith. Hence the intellectual movement of the eighteenth century was of a much less violent and adventurous character in America than in Europe.

'We know,' says M. Guizot, 'how, in the eighteenth century, urged onwards by the progress of wealth, population, and all other motive social powers, as well as by the impetuous current of its own activity, human thought aimed at the conquest of the world. The political sciences soared upwards, and still higher than the sciences mounted the philosophical spirit of the age—haughty and self-willed; aspiring to pervade everything, and to regulate everything. Without excitement, without commotion — rather by yielding to its natural bent, than by forcing itself into new paths — Anglo-America took its place in this grand movement.'

Nothing, in fact, was there in British America akin

to that fanatical outburst of unbelief, and those blind philosophical prejudices, which in France thrust themselves into the place of the superstitions of a bygone age; nothing which answers to the popular impiety which preluded the excesses of the French Revolution. The men who effected the American revolution were not all of them believers. In different degrees, Jefferson, Franklin, Gouverneur Morris, John Adams, were free-thinkers, but without intolerance or display, without ostentatious irony, quietly, and almost privily; for the masses remained believers. Not to offend them, it was necessary to speak with respect of sacred things; to produce a deep impression upon them, it was requisite to appeal to their religious feelings; and prayers and public fasts continued to be instruments resorted to whenever it was found desirable, whether by agitators or the State, to act powerfully on the minds of the people.

Within the political as within the religious area, the national traditions were bulwarks against the irruption of foreign ideas; hence the literature of France had but a very indirect influence on the political opinions of the American revolutionists. The relations between the countries were few, the habits of thought too different to allow of the social conceptions of the subjects of Louis XV. becoming at that time popular in America. Except Montesquieu, our writers were little read and less cited. Coke, Milton, Harrington, Locke, Grotius, and especially the Bible, Magna Charta, the common law, local charters and histories: these were the only authorities invoked by the political agitators, preachers, and pamphleteers, who roused the American people to combat for their rights. I have never met with the name of Rousseau in their mouths, nor yet the expression

'sovereignty of the people.' The doctrine that the general will must always be obeyed, that it is necessarily reasonable and just, had perhaps flashed through certain minds, but vaguely, and without mastering them. Patrick Henry, the popular agitator of Virginia, affected 'to bow down before the majesty of the people,' but without attaching to his words any precise or theoretical sense. Otis, the popular orator of Massachusetts, proclaimed, 'that all men are equal, that the people are not made for kings, and that their consent is necessary to warrant taxation.' He went so far as to remind his countrymen, that 'the violation of these principles had cost one king of England his head and another his throne;' but, in the midst of the rhetorical exaggerations which sometimes led him to the very verge of insanity, the absurd notion, that everything must yield to mere numbers, and that their will must be law, never entered his brain. In spite of their democratic instincts, the men who founded the republic of the United States never identified the idea of good government with that of government by the masses, and so little was the triumph of the popular will the exclusive concern of the framers of the first State constitutions, that Jefferson, in 1816, thought himself called upon to speak of their political knowledge in a tone of depreciation, which, though highly unjust, is not on that account the less significative. 'We imagined,' he says, 'everything republican which was not monarchy. We had not yet penetrated to the mother principle, that governments are republican only in proportion as they embody the will of their people and execute it: hence our first constitutions had really no leading principles in them.' *

* Jefferson's Works, vol. vii. p. 9.

CHAPTER II.

MOTIVES FIRST INFLUENCING ADAMS AND JEFFERSON TO ENGAGE IN POLITICS — SPEECH OF JAMES OTIS ON THE WRITS OF ASSISTANCE — SPEECH OF PATRICK HENRY ON THE STAMP ACT — CREATION OF CORRESPONDING COMMITTEES BETWEEN THE COLONIES — VIRGINIA PROPOSES CONVENING A GENERAL CONGRESS — JEFFERSON NOT AN ORATOR — WHY ORATORS DID NOT TAKE THE LEAD IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION.

AT the moment when the struggle between England and the Colonies broke out, Jefferson was still a light-hearted student, devoted almost exclusively to elegant literature and pleasure. It was on witnessing the resistance elicited by the arbitrary acts of Parliament that his political feelings were first aroused.

Two young men, born very far from each other, under very different conditions, but destined often to come in contact during their lives, and to expire on the same day—the anniversary of the great event that has illustrated their names—John Adams, the son of a large New England farmer, and Thomas Jefferson, the elegant companion of Fauquier, received analogous impressions from two events, which occurred within four years of each other, and which they both agree in considering as the respective points of departure of the revolution in Massachusetts and Virginia.

John Adams was twenty-four years of age. Canada had just been wrested from France by the combined efforts of the colonists and the mother-country. The



calm and prosperity of the British provinces in North America, for a long while disturbed by the enterprises of their brave and adventurous neighbours, seemed to be now permanently assured; but, in spite of so satisfactory a result, there was a general feeling of discontent and restlessness, especially in New England. Disquieting rumours were rife in Boston; charters, so it was said, were menaced; Great Britain, taking advantage of the imposing attitude she had acquired by her recent triumphs, and of the presence of her troops in America, was about to recast the provincial constitutions, extend the power of the Crown, and give a death-blow to liberty.

'These Englishmen are going to play the devil with us,' said John Adams to a young lawyer of the name of Sewall. 'They will overturn everything. We must resist them, and that by force. I wish you would write in the newspapers, and urge a general attention to the Militia — to their exercises and discipline; for we must resist in arms.' I answered, 'All this, I fear, is true; but why do you not write yourself?' *

They both hesitated. John Adams distrusted his own talent, and Sewall was afraid of committing himself. The moment had now arrived, which is the first stage in all revolutions, when men's minds, beginning to ferment, still wait in suspense, excited and perplexed, for some external impetus, which shall have the effect of propelling them on their way, and of assigning them the position they are to occupy.

It was the severity of the Custom-house regulations which gave rise to the earliest opposition in Massachusetts. The Puritan merchants were not always

* Adams's Works, vol. ii. p. 78; vol. iv. p. 6.

thorough-going Englishmen, and such of the subjects of Louis XV. as did not directly menace their tranquillity, and could put money in their pockets, were deemed very fit objects for their good offices. Sometimes, by purchasing the connivance, at others by eluding the vigilance, of the governors, they established a contraband trade on a vast scale with the French West Indian colonies, made no scruple of provisioning the enemies' fleets and garrisons, and smuggled into the American ports various descriptions of foreign merchandise to avoid the high duties imposed upon them by the *Acts of trade.*

In spite of his partiality for his transatlantic countrymen, Pitt could not overlook such flagrant irregularities. In a tone that admitted of no reply, he gave peremptory orders for their prevention. The Custom officers became now particular, and, finding their means of search and prevention insufficient, applied to the Supreme Court of Massachusetts for what were called *writs of assistance*, granting a general power of search, under authority of which they claimed the right to ransack private property, enter and examine private dwellings, and compel the first comer to lend them a hand. The legality of these warrants, placing as they did the public at the mercy of the lowest custom-house officer, was disputed by the citizens of Boston, who made an application to the Supreme Court to refuse their issue. In his capacity of provincial advocate-general, James Otis, then five-and-thirty years of age, was called upon to support the claims of the Admiralty. A considerable facility and cleverness in enlivening the dry science of precedents with considerations of a general nature, a vigorous talent, a haughty and feverish warmth of feeling and expression,



a dogmatic and aggressive tone, an intractable pride, had already procured him many admirers and many enemies among his brother barristers. In point of fact, however, neither his intellectual power, nor the brilliancy of his imagination, nor yet the depth and extent of his learning, were commensurate with his own estimate of them or with his reputation. He was a man of a proud, hard, violent temperament, at the mercy of a brain acting without purpose and easily misled. Constitutionally irritable, and of a whimsical fantastic humour, he was alternately a prey to outbursts of rash exaltation, and to suggestions of distrustful timidity; open by turns to the noblest inspirations, and the merest personal considerations; but, like many of those who are destined to die mad, he had the faculty of profoundly impressing the minds of his hearers. His family was among the most devoted adherents of the Crown. As the recompense of long services, the office of Chief Justice had been frequently promised to his father. The place had become vacant, and the political gossip of the province announced the appointment of Colonel Otis as certain, when it was given to Hutchinson, an unpopular and intriguing man, known as a notorious place-hunter. Wounded by this affront to his father, and anxious to do something agreeable to the public, which sympathised with him, the young advocate-general fired up against the proceedings of the Admiralty, refused to defend them, sent in his resignation, undertook the defence of the people, and then, as Hutchinson expresses it, 'from a small spark there came a great fire.'

In the month of February 1761, all the leading men in Boston flocked into court to hear this unexpected champion of public liberty. Lost in the crowd,

the studious, choleric John Adams, endeavouring to take notes, but too excited, as he tells us, to put down anything in order, carried away from the discussion impressions the more heated in proportion as they were vague, and which, even in old age, he could not recall without marked emotion: —

'But Otis was a flame of fire! . . . . . He reproached the nation, parliaments, and kings, with injustice, ungenerosity, ingratitude, cruelty. . . . . With a promptitude of classical allusion, a depth of research, a rapid summary of historical events and dates, a profusion of legal authorities, a prophetic glance of his eye into futurity, and a torrent of impetuous eloquence, he hurried away everything before him. . . . . Every man of a crowded audience appeared to me to go away, as I did, ready to take arms against writs of assistance. . . . I have no scruple in making a confession, with all the simplicity of Jean Jacques Rousseau, that I never turned over the leaves of these statutes, or any section of them, without pronouncing a hearty curse upon them. . . . Then and there was the first scene of the first act of opposition to the arbitrary claims of Great Britain;— then and there the child Independence was born. In fifteen years, namely, in 1776, he grew up to manhood, and declared himself free.'*

'The child' remained for several years in its cradle, asleep, and unheard of by America. The war-cry raised in Massachusetts had hardly resounded beyond the province. It was this province alone which the proceedings in the Supreme Court concerned; and the means of publicity were too scanty, the colonial populations too dispersed and divided, provincial patriotism too exclusive, for a purely local transaction to vibrate

* Adam's Works, vol. x. pp. 247, 314, 362; letter to Tudor, 1817–1818. The question of the legality of the writs of assistance was never decided judicially. The case was adjourned on the pretext of getting information from England, and no judgement was ever given.



through the continent. Even at Boston the affair had a temporary lull, and there seemed reason to suppose it forgotten.

Glad of peace, and content to reap its fruits, the citizens became absorbed in attending to their private interests. No great question, no important difference of opinion, occurred to resuscitate their complaints against England, and the seed which Otis had cast to the winds lay dormant in the public mind. To make it germinate and grow, and send forth its offshoots far and wide, it was first requisite that the mother-country should commit aggressive acts of a more signal character and extended import, and that Virginia, of all the British provinces, the one most renowned for its fidelity to the Crown, should give the signal of resistance. It was by this signal that the political sympathies of Jefferson were awakened.

He was now twenty-two years of age; and Patrick Henry, one of his boon companions, whom a brilliant speech against some abuse of the royal prerogative had suddenly raised from obscurity, was for the first time sitting in the Chamber of Burgesses of Virginia, when the news of the *Stamp Act* spread a melancholy stupor throughout America, to all appearance the precursor of despair and prostration.

Such were yet, in the breasts of the Virginian aristocracy, the feelings of filial piety towards the mother country,* that the most influential and experienced members of the Chamber remained silent and perplexed, not daring to approach the matter which was the cause of the general consternation. In spite of his growing popularity, Patrick Henry felt himself

* See Appendix i. for a Sketch of Virginian Society.

still a novice; unknown and ill at ease in the midst of this patrician body, he hesitated to take the initiative in the discussion. The close of the session, however, was at hand, and the tax was about to be levied without any protest of the House against the usurped authority of Parliament. He at once made up his mind; hastily wrote a few lines upon an old law book, then, rising with awkward embarrassment, proposed in a faltering tone those celebrated resolutions against the Stamp Act which set America in a flame:—

'Resolved, therefore, that the General Assembly of this colony have the sole right and power to lay taxes and impositions upon the inhabitants of this colony; and that every attempt to vest such power in any person or persons whatsoever, other than the General Assembly aforesaid, has a manifest tendency to destroy British as well as American freedom.'*

It was with this declaration of principles that Patrick Henry's resolutions concluded. His speech met with incessant interruptions; a violent debate ensued. Jefferson was present in one of the lobbies, listening with curiosity and uneasiness to this parliamentary strife, in which the counsels of the prudent and the powerful had come into collision with the fiery revolutionary ardour of a young orator without position in the world, without experience, almost without education. Patrick Henry was one of those men whom opposition excites and tumult emboldens. He soon recovered from his embarrassment. Kindling by degrees at the sound of his own voice, he gave rein to his brilliant imagination, and then taking an impressive attitude, divesting himself, as it were, of his ill-favouredness, and casting a keen and penetrating glance

* Sparks's American Biography, vol. xi. p. 267.



around the House, he compelled it to follow him through all the turns of an argument, at one and the same time discursive and powerful, which wound up with picturesque images, mingled with abrupt bursts of indignation and invective. 'They were great indeed; such as I have never heard from any other man. He appeared to me to speak as Homer wrote.'* Jefferson's bosom thrilled with enthusiasm as he saw his friend bound at a single step to the very edge of insurrection, and then, warned by the clamours of the assembly, firmly planting his foot there without overstepping it: 'Tarquin and Cæsar each had his Brutus, Charles I. had his Cromwell, and George III.——' 'Treason!' cried the speaker. 'Treason, treason!' shouted from all sides the supporters of the government—'will profit doubtless by their example,' haughtily continued Patrick Henry, without even taking the trouble to recommence the interrupted phrase.† The House passed his resolutions by twenty against nineteen.

Such was the first political exhibition witnessed by the young student who was destined to become the constructor and chief of the republican party; such was the first political triumph of that Patrick Henry whom revolutionary tradition hands down to us as the greatest orator of the new world—a true child of uncultivated and rich America, though the great-nephew of the learned and able Robertson! At first, a wanderer through the woods from mere listlessness and love of liberty, then a tradesman and farmer from necessity, he had been twice a bankrupt from indulging himself too much behind his counter

* *Autobiography*; Jefferson's Works, vol. i. p. 4.

† Bancroft's History of the United States, vol. v. p. 277.

in playing upon his violin, reading Livy, and being more intent on observing the character of his customers than looking after the payment of their bills. The son-in-law of an innkeeper from love, and his partner from good nature, he for a long while remained the crack speaker of the tap-room, for want of a more dignified audience; then, after studying law for six weeks, he was called to the bar, and soon, by the brilliancy of a highly-coloured eloquence, astonished and won the sympathy even of those of his competitors who had been the most forward to jeer at his mean dress and deformed figure, his awkward manners, ungrammatical language, and incorrect pronunciation. Of all the American revolutionists, he was by temperament the most of an artist, and the least of a politician: in disposition, at the same time, insolent and daring, sociable and capricious, sprightly and meditative; ignorant, yet alive to the charms of literature; a moralist full of penetration, but indisposed to action; kind of heart, generous, sympathetic; always surrendering himself to his own emotions, and communicating them to his hearers as much by the vivacity of his gestures, look, and emphasis, as by the brilliancy of his declamation, or the force of his arguments; a skilful combatant in an assembly in the day of battle but almost always too much at the mercy of his own impressions to be able to act in obedience to a concerted plan, or steadily to adhere to well-defined and accepted principles; equally insensible to official influence and party-spirit, equally swayed by patriotism and the love of popularity. For the space of ten years Patrick Henry was in the Virginian Assembly the orator of opposition without being its leader, more anxious to keep opinion on the alert than to direct it, to inflame the imagination of the masses than



to acquire an ascendency over his colleagues; always with them in the van, and a few steps in advance of them; one of the first to foresee and desire independence, one of the first to share the dangers of those whom he was exciting to revolt; by turns a tribune of the people and a soldier, the instigator and companion in arms of the Virginian insurgents.*

Four years later† Jefferson, now called to the bar, obtained a seat in the Assembly, and took his place amongst the most resolute defenders of American rights. He had not the wealth of imagination or warmth of feeling, the fluency or fullness of speech, the sympathetic ardour or soldier-like enthusiasm of Patrick Henry. He was already a political legist, a philosopher, and man of the world. A quick, clear, active intelligence, fertile in arguments and combinations; very generous in his speculations respecting the rights of humanity, very sincere in his philanthropy, but acting less from emotion than conviction; very bold in his theories of colonial rights, very confident in the justice and success of their cause, but without any very strong tendencies towards independence, without bitterness against the Crown, without rancour against his adversaries; not as yet soured by the strife, though already conscious of a certain pleasure in familiarising himself with the petty stratagems of party; animated, attractive, able; open in his relations with his friends and intimates; sometimes communicative even to indiscretion in private, but in public, whether from shyness or calculation, habitually restrained, expressing himself not without facility and clearness, but with a parsimony of oratorical embellishment which he was obliged to erect into a system.

* See Life of Patrick Henry, by Wm. Wirt. † 1769.

In spite of the friendly feeling of the principal leaders of the Assembly towards him, his first attempts were far from being successful. The Chamber of Burgesses was about to frame an address in reply to the opening speech of the governor, Lord Botetourt, and it was no doubt the practice in Virginia, at that time as it still is in England, to assign the moving or seconding of the address to some one or other of the younger members, in order to give them an opportunity of being noticed at the opening of the session. Mr. Pendleton, one of the lights of the Assembly, therefore, requested Jefferson to draw up the resolutions which were to be the groundwork of the address. It was a veteran's courtesy.

'These resolutions,' says Jefferson, 'were accepted by the House, and Pendleton, Nicholas, myself, and some others, were appointed a committee to prepare the address. The committee desired me to do it, but, when presented, it was thought to pursue too strictly the diction of the resolutions, and that their subjects were not sufficiently amplified. Mr. Nicholas chiefly objected to it, and was desired by the committee to draw one more at large, which he did, with amplification enough, and it was accepted. Being a young man, as well as a young member, it made on me an impression proportioned to the sensibility of that time of life.'*

Jefferson was, however, not discouraged, and somewhat later in the same session made a new essay of his strength. It was on behalf of a noble cause, to which he always adhered, but in furtherance of which he would, in all probability, have displayed a more resolute zeal, if he had not thus, on his first entering public life, been so near learning, to his own cost, how

* Jefferson's Works, vol. vi. p. 486; Letter to W. Wirt, Aug. 5, 1815.



dangerous it was to undertake its defence. 'I drew to this subject,' he said, 'the attention of Colonel Bland, one of the oldest, ablest, and most respected members, and he undertook to move for certain moderate extension of the protection of the laws to these people. I seconded his motion, and, as a younger member, was more spared in the debate; but he was denounced as an enemy to his country, and was treated with the greatest indecorum.'*

Tempestuous struggles of this kind were not at all of a nature to bring out Jefferson's talents. He had, instinctively, but little taste for those oratorical tournaments, where men meet in open lists, without other arms or armour than the gift of speech; where it is necessary to expose oneself to blows, instantly to return them, without having the time to choose one's ground or outflank the enemy, and with the foreknowledge that there is no coming off as victor, otherwise than bruised and bleeding. He was much more at home in those less noisy and remoter struggles, where every blow is prepared in the privacy of the closet, and where the danger, though not less real, is less immediate: hence he willingly left to his political friends the honour of carrying out the plans of campaigns not unfrequently sketched by himself.

Of all the means of warfare employed by the people of America against the ministers of George III., the most formidable were the corresponding committees. They were devised and organised in 1773 by a small knot of persons, of whom Jefferson was one of the most active; but the idea did not originate with him. On several occasions, the patriots of Boston had at-

* Hildreth's History of the United States, vol. iii. p. 294.

tempted to put it into practice. Their efforts, however, had been unsuccessful, and it was Jefferson who, taking up their project, did most to persuade his colleagues to make a vigorous use of a mode of action which was marvellously in harmony with his political instincts. 'The consulting members,' says Jefferson, speaking of the corresponding committees, 'proposed to me to move them; but I urged that it should be done by Mr. Carr, my friend and brother-in-law, then a new member, to whom I wished an opportunity should be given of making known to the House his great worth and talents.'*

A year later, there was another meeting of the same persons terminating in a similar result. As a punishment for the tea-riot,† Parliament had closed the port

* *Autobiography*; Jefferson's Works, vol. i. p. 5.

† The resistance of America to the Stamp Act having induced Parliament to repeal it, this concession was at first received in the colonies with a general burst of gratitude, and enthusiasm for George III. (1767.) But the spirit of opposition was almost instantly aroused again by new fiscal measures, equally at variance with the claim of the Americans not to be taxed without their consent. Rather than pay the import-duties upon tea, glass, paper, &c., voted by Parliament on the motion of Charles Townshend (June 1767), they had again renewed the patriotic leagues against the importation of English manufactures which they had formed after the passing of the Stamp Act; the provincial assemblies protested against the proceedings in Parliament; the agitation became organized; the population of Boston began to show symptoms of sedition; Parliament, alarmed, resolved, on a motion of Lord North's, to abolish all duties imposed in 1767, except the duty on tea (1770); tranquillity was again restored, and for three years there was a general lull; trading politicians were alone on the alert, trying ineffectually to excite the masses; the agreements entered into in favour of non-importation began to be laxly observed; the commerce between the colonies and the mother country had resumed its ordinary course. The tax on tea, however, continued



of Boston. The Act had just arrived in America, but did not produce the effect on the masses which the opposition had a right to expect from it. Their apathy became a source of uneasiness; the question now was how to excite them out of their indifference. In quest of expedients, the Virginian agitators, assembled in the library of the Chamber of Burgesses, gave full scope to their imagination. While thus engaged, the idea of appealing to the religious feelings of the people occurs to them; it finds favour at once, and the determination is taken to get up a public fast; but now comes the pinch: they are anything else but church-goers, and have no idea how they are to manage to speak in a tone suitable to the occasion:—

'With the help, therefore, of Rushworth,' says Jefferson, 'whom we rummaged over for the revolutionary precedents and forms of the Puritans of that day, preserved by him, we cooked up a resolution, somewhat modernizing their phrases, for appointing the first day of June, on which the Port Bill was to commence, for a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer; to implore Heaven to avert from us the evils of civil war; to inspire us with firmness in support of our rights; and to turn the hearts of the King and Parliament to moderation and justice. To give greater emphasis to our proposition, we agreed to wait the next morning on Mr. Nicholas, whose

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to be unproductive, thanks either to the activity of the smugglers or the abstinence of the patriots. Lord North publicly encouraged the East India Company to send large cargoes of tea to the colonies. The Americans regarded this act as an affront. The first ships that arrived laden with tea in the port of Boston were boarded by a band of 'sons of liberty,' disguised as Indians: the tea was thrown into the sea. Three months afterwards, Parliament declared the port of Boston closed, and its privileges transferred to Salem. Dating from this moment, the spirit of resistance never ceased to spread in America.

grave and religious character was more in unison with the tone of our resolution, and to solicit him to move it.'*

The idea was completely successful; the chamber voted the fast by acclamation, and was immediately dissolved. The members retired to a room in an adjoining inn to deliberate on the best method of turning the crisis to account. They agreed to press upon the other colonies the necessity of assembling a general congress,† of convening the people for the purpose of choosing delegates, and of making the day of election fall on the fast day. On June 1, 1774, the churches resounded with the most patriotic language. 'The people met generally,' says Jefferson, 'with anxiety and alarm in their countenances, and the effect of the day, through the whole colony, was like a shock of electricity, arousing every man, and placing him erect and

* Autobiography; Jefferson's Works, vol. i. p. 6.

† The idea of a general congress, no more than that of committees of correspondence, is due to the Virginian statesmen: theirs is the honour of realising it. As far back as June 1765, James Otis had advised the Assembly of Massachusetts to reply to the Stamp Act by the convocation of a congress; and, on the invitation of that province, delegates from nine out of the thirteen colonies had in fact assembled at New York on the 7th of October, 1765. But this incomplete gathering of the representatives of America could not become the germ of a permanent institution. It soon dissolved itself, after framing petitions to the King and Parliament, and with it the idea of a general congress fell into oblivion. It was by the system of correspondence between the colonies, organised by the Chamber of Burgesses of Virginia, that the public mind was again turned in that direction. On the 7th of July, 1773, four months after this organization, Franklin, writing from London to Thomas Cushing, President of the Assembly of Massachusetts, expressed the hope that out of these committees would come a congress; and the same day, in an official letter to the Massachusetts Assembly, he formally proposed convening a general congress. In less than a year afterwards, Jefferson and his friends were putting Franklin's idea into execution.

solidly on his centre. They chose, universally, delegates for the convention.' He was himself returned for his own county.*

Throughout the whole course of his career, Jefferson preserved this faculty of accurately fathoming the masses, this capacity of exciting them, and this repugnance to addressing public assemblies otherwise than by writing, or through intermediate agents. It is in allusion to this latter trait that the fiery and conceited John Adams, who had been a greater orator and a less able statesman than Jefferson, informs us in his memoirs, with a mixed tone of triumph and disparagement, that his successful competitor in the election for the presidency of the United States had been one of the most silent members in congress. 'I never heard him utter three sentences together.' He then adds, with a melancholy reference to himself:

'From all I have read of the history of Greece and Rome, England and France, and all I have observed at home and abroad, eloquence in public assemblies is not the surest road to fame or preferment — at least, unless it be used with caution, very rarely, and with great reserve. The examples of Washington, Franklin, and Jefferson are enough to show that silence and reserve in public are more efficacious than argumentation or oratory. A public speaker who inserts himself, or is urged by others, into the conduct of affairs, by daily exertions to justify his measures, and answer the objections of opponents, makes himself too familiar with the public, and unavoidably makes himself enemies.'†

Never, in fact, did any orator during the American revolution play so great a part as Jefferson, Franklin, and Washington; but has Adams given us the correct

* Jefferson's Works, *Autobiography*, vol. i. p. 7.

† John Adams's Works, vol. ii. p. 511.

explanation of the fact? I take the liberty of doubting it. The distance of the colonial assemblies from one another, the standing orders of congress, the particular character of this revolution, which owed its victory, not to intestine struggles between classes and parties, but to a war of power against power, militated against the possibility of a statesman taking the lead in America by the influence of his eloquence. Each province, each city, had its platform; the United States had no national platform from which an orator could address the whole country; congress deliberated with closed doors; those of its members who were instructed to promulgate the result of its deliberations were the only persons who had an opportunity of making their services known to the country. The act, moreover, by which it consummated the revolution, putting an end to the hesitations of the people, also put an end to any great internal discussion, left nothing surviving but a question of international right, which could be decided only by war or diplomacy, and which made the future success of the revolution depend, not on the energy of debate, but on the courage of soldiers, and the dexterity of diplomatists. Supposing their merits to be otherwise equal, the patriots who, in the secret deliberations of the great national council, secured the victory by their eloquence to the policy of colonial emancipation, could not expect so universal a renown as the fortunate writer who announced the declaration of independence to the world, the able negotiator who caused it to be accepted by Europe, and the virtuous general who compelled Great Britain to acknowledge it.

It is, therefore, all the more incumbent on the historian to bring more fully into light the grandeur of their services, and the difficulty of their task, which



there is a considerable tendency in the present day to underrate. The rupture between America and England appears to us so simple a fact, was foreseen in Europe so long before it occurred, and has been so rich in fortunate results, that it requires a certain amount of effort, on our part, in order to believe that it was not eagerly desired by the colonies long before the War of Independence broke out; and when we hear John Adams, Jay, Madison, and Jefferson * protesting vehemently against the 'insulting imputations' of Botta, charging them and their fellow-countrymen with not having been thoroughly sincere in their continued protestations of fidelity to George III.—when we hear them speaking of the opposition they encountered within their own country on the day when, compelled by a sense of duty, they came to the painful determination of breaking off all connection with the mother country—we are rather apt, on this side of the Atlantic, to accuse them of having, in the account they give of their inward feelings, been guilty of historical duplicity, the more effectually to conceal their political duplicity; and also of having exaggerated the difficulties they had to grapple with, the better to give an exaggerated impression of their own merits. Nothing is more unfounded. Therefore, were it only from a feeling of equity, the history of the growth and developement of the idea of independence could hardly find a more appropriate place than in this sketch of the man whose name has been identified with its triumph.

* Life and Works of Jay, vol. ii. pp. 410–417. Life and Writings of Washington, vol. ii. pp. 497.

CHAPTER III.

1750—1776.

THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE BRITISH COLONIES IN NORTH AMERICA FORESEEN IN EUROPE AS FAR BACK AS THE MIDDLE OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY — THE DUKE DE CHOISEUL BELIEVES IN THE DISMEMBERMENT OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE, AND GIVES IT HIS BEST WISHES — UP TO THE TIME OF THE DUKE DE CHOISEUL'S FALL, FRANKLIN STILL REPUDIATES THE IDEA OF A FOREIGN INTERVENTION, WASHINGTON THAT OF AN ARMED RESISTANCE: SAMUEL ADAMS ALONE ASPIRES TO INDEPENDENCE (1770) — VARIOUS THEORIES OF THE AMERICANS ABOUT THEIR RIGHTS — *Summary view of the rights of British America* — STATE OF PUBLIC OPINION IN AMERICA AT THE MEETING OF CONGRESS, 1774 — PATRICK HENRY ALONE PROCLAIMS HIMSELF A DECIDED REVOLUTIONIST — CHARACTER OF THE ACTS OF CONGRESS — FRANKLIN DECIDES IN FAVOUR OF A RUPTURE, AND NEGOTIATES ON BEHALF OF THE COLONIES ONLY — THE BATTLE OF LEXINGTON, AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE PUBLIC — CONGRESS OF 1775, AND THE PART WHICH JEFFERSON PLAYED IN IT — CONGRESS PETITIONS THE KING FOR THE LAST TIME — THE MAJORITY OF THE COUNTRY DESIRES RECONCILIATION, AND AWAITS THE RESULT OF THE PETITION — THE KING REFUSES TO RECEIVE IT, AND PROCLAIMS THE AMERICANS REBELS — WASHINGTON GIVES UP ALL HOPES OF A RECONCILIATION — CONGRESS LOOKS OUT FOR ALLIANCES IN EUROPE — VIEWS OF THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT — CONGRESS THROWS OPEN THE COLONIAL PORTS TO ALL NATIONS — IT RECOMMENDS THE COLONIES TO ORGANIZE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS — THE VIRGINIAN CONVENTION INSTRUCTS ITS DELEGATES TO CONGRESS TO PROPOSE THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE — JEFFERSON ELECTED MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE.

'COLONIES are like fruits, which adhere to the tree only until they are ripe. The instant they suffice to themselves, they do what Carthage did, what America

will one day do;'* so said Turgot in 1750. The thirteen colonies of North America contained at that time about 1,260,000 souls; the population doubled every twenty years, and John Adams could already exclaim, in his patriotic pride: 'It looks likely to me, for if we can remove the turbulent Gallicks (from Canada), our people, according to the exactest computations, will in another century become more numerous than England itself. And then the united force of all Europe will not be able to subdue us.' †

The reverses experienced in America by the British arms at the beginning of the Seven Years' War, far from shaking the confidence of the colonies in their resources, moved them to great discontent against the government which had so mismanaged them:

'Some persons,' said John Adams, 'wished we had nothing to do with Great Britain for ever. Of this number, I distinctly remember I was myself one — fully believing that we were able to defend ourselves against the French and Indians, without any assistance or embarrassment from Great Britain. It is true, there might be times and circumstances in which an individual, or a few individuals, might entertain and express a wish that America was independent in all respects; but these were "*rari nantes in gurgite vasto.*" In 1758 and 1759, when Amherst and Wolfe changed the fortune of the war by a more able and faithful conduct of it, I again rejoiced in the name of Great Britain, and should have rejoiced in it to this day, had not the King and Parliament committed high treason and rebellion against America as soon as they had conquered Canada and made peace with France.' ‡

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* Œuvres de Turgot, vol. ii. p. 66. See his second discourse, delivered at the Sorbonne, on Dec. 11, 1750.

† John Adams's Works, vol. i. p. 23; vol. ix. pp. 591, 597.

‡ John Adams's Works, vol. x. pp. 394, 373.

John Adams was in the right. The Americans had already become very exacting subjects, very irritable, and very determined upon being well governed; but they were not yet turbulent and systematic opponents. They had levied, clothed, and paid 25,000 men; they had at their disposal 30,000 sailors.* They were conscious of their force, and aspired to the peaceful enjoyment of their rights and prosperity. This was the extent of their ambition. Would it be content to rest there? This was a question put by many persons in England; and an anonymous pamphlet, attributed to Burke,† appeared in London in 1760, in which the author sought to prove that, in order to restrain an increase of power becoming dangerous to the empire, it would be an act of good policy to restore Canada to France, and once more to place the American provinces in juxta-position with enemies who would make them feel the necessity of protection, and the advantages of dependence. In the negotiations begun in Paris, in 1761, the Duke de Choiseul skilfully turned this feeling of anxiety to account.

'I wonder,' said Choiseul to Stanley, 'that your great Pitt should be so attached to the acquisition of Canada. The inferiority of its population will never suffer it to be dangerous; and being in the hands of France, it will always be of service to you to keep your colonies in that dependence which they will not fail to shake off the moment Canada shall be ceded.'‡

* Appendix, ii. M. Durand to the Duke de Choiseul; London, August 11, and Dec. 1, 1767. See Works of Franklin, vol. iv. p. 157.

† See Franklin's Works, vol. iv. p. 1.

‡ Bancroft's *History of the United States*, vol. iv. p. 399.



Had Turgot, Burke, and the Duke de Choiseul had a closer view of the real situation of the British North American provinces, they would perhaps have been somewhat less clear-sighted. The colonies were yet very far from being able to form themselves into a nation; and Franklin, who had attempted, but in vain, in 1754,* to establish a permanent understanding between them in defence of their common interests, was able to say with sincerity, when replying to Burke's pamphlet, and arguing it was the policy of England to preserve Canada:

'I shall next consider the other supposition — that their growth may render them *dangerous*. Of this, I own, I have not the least conception, when I consider that we have already *fourteen separate governments* on the maritime coast of the continent; and, if we extend our settlements, shall probably have as many more behind them on the inland side. Those we now have are not only under different governors, but have different forms of government, different laws, different interests, and some of them different religious persuasions, and different manners.

'Their jealousy of each other is so great that, however necessary a union of the colonies has long been, for their common defence and security against their enemies, and how sensible soever each colony has been of that necessity, yet they have never been able to effect such a union among themselves, nor even to agree in requesting the mother country to establish it for them. If they could not agree to unite for their defence against the French and Indians, who were perpetually harassing their settlements, burning their villages, and murdering their people, can it reasonably be supposed there is any danger of their uniting against their own nation, which protects and encourages them; with which they have so many connexions and ties of blood, inte-

* See Appendix, No. ii.

rest, and affection; and which, it is well known, they all love much more than they love one another?

'In short, there are so many causes that must operate to prevent it, that I will venture to say a union amongst them for such a purpose is not merely improbable, it is impossible. . . . When I say such a union is impossible, I mean without the most grievous tyranny and oppression. . . . While the government is mild and just — while important civil and religious rights are secure — such subjects will be dutiful and obedient. *The waves do not rise but when the winds blow.*'*

Seven years later, after having witnessed the unanimous resistance of the Americans to the first attempts of parliament at usurpation, M. Durand, the French chargé at London, still noticed the same want of coherence between the colonies;† though, in spite of the outburst of monarchical enthusiasm which followed the repeal of the Stamp Act, he no longer inferred, as a necessary consequence,‡ that their union and

* Franklin's Works, vol. iv. p. 41.

† M. Durand to the Duke de Choiseul; London, August 11, 1767. See Appendix, No. ii.

‡ Franklin's Works, vol. vii. p. 357; Letter to W. Franklin, London, August 28, 1767. M. Durand to the Duke de Choiseul, London, August 11, 1767. See Appendix, No. ii.—In a letter to Lord Kames, April 11, 1767, Franklin himself, combating the persistent determination of Parliament to extend its sovereignty over colonies not represented in it, and examining into the possibility of bringing about an intimate union between England and America, by means of the latter's representation in the House of Commons, had written to this effect: 'I have lived so great a part of my life in Britain, and have formed so many friendships in it, that I love it, and sincerely wish it prosperity; and therefore wish to see that union, on which alone I think it can be secured and established. As to America, the advantages of such a union to her are not so apparent. She may suffer at present under the arbitrary power of this country; she may suffer for awhile in a separation from it; but these are temporary

independence were to be treated as chimeras, and making use of Franklin's conversations to refute his pamphlet, he wrote to M. de Choiseul:

'Gathered together from every corner of Europe, spread over the surface of America, of all religions and tongues, their union with one another is as little to be expected as their attachment to England. . . . For it is the policy of that country to keep up this medley of nations, and this discordance of races, as a means of preserving their colonies, and it is a fixed principle with her more and more to comminute territories and governments, in order to prevent any large area of country being subject to the influence of a common feeling and object; a judicious policy; less powerful, however, than the common interest which links together men opposed to each other's dogmas, and the least agreed as to forms of Government. . . . The desire for independence must eventually pervade them. Yet, I can very well conceive that the

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evils, which she will outgrow. Scotland and Ireland are differently circumstanced. Confined by the sea, they can scarcely increase in numbers, wealth, and strength, so as to overbalance England. But America — an immense territory, favoured by nature with all advantages of climate, soils, great navigable rivers, lakes, &c.—must become a great country, populous and mighty, and will, in a less time than is generally conceived, be able to shake off any shackles that may be imposed upon her, and perhaps place them on the imposers. In the meantime, every act of oppression will sour their tempers, lessen greatly, if not annihilate, the profits of your commerce with them, and hasten their final revolt; for the seeds of liberty are universally found there, and nothing can eradicate them. And yet there remains among that people so much respect, veneration, and affection for Britain, that, if cultivated prudently, with a kind usage and tenderness for their privileges, they might be easily governed still for ages, without force or any considerable expense. But I do not see here a sufficient quantity of the wisdom that is necessary to produce such a conduct, and I lament the want of it.'—Franklin's Works, vol. vii. p. 334; Letter to Lord Kames, April 11, 1767.

apprehension England has of such a result will retard its accomplishment, and that she will henceforth avoid everything which can tend to draw them together. . . . That the revolution will, consequently, be slow and insensible; in a word, that the submission of the colonies will be precarious; but that there will be a careful avoidance of an irritating control on the part of their governors.'*

The Duke de Choiseul was not at all inclined to believe that the revolution would be so remote, or England so wise. He entertained for Great Britain, for its institutions, for its prime minister, Lord Chatham,† a mixed feeling of malevolence, fear, and scorn.

He thought he had a right to abstain from nothing which could compensate France for the humiliation in

* M. Durand to the Duke de Choiseul, 11th Aug., 1767. See Appendix, No. ii.

† Mr. Pitt, who, after the consummation of the family compact, had quitted office, rather than consent to peace with France (October 5, 1761), and who, after the repeal of the Stamp Act, had received the King's commands to form a new administration, resumed his position as prime minister in 1766, with a seat in the House of Lords, and the title of Earl of Chatham. This elevation to the peerage puzzled Choiseul strangely. Believing that Pitt's whole strength lay in the House of Commons, he was inclined to regard him as a shorn Samson;— then, again, far from considering him as reduced to impotence, he expressed his fears that Chatham, to indemnify himself for the loss of his popularity, and to recover his ascendency, would plunge into a warlike policy, and devise schemes of conquest. So he wrote to M. Durand, on Aug. 11, 1766. And in other letters to the same person, as well as to the Comte de Guerchy and the Marquis of Grimaldi, he dwells upon the imperious character of the English minister, and the probable audacity of his designs. It is manifest that Chatham had terrified him into an exaggerated estimate of his power and influence. 'He would be a great man,' wrote Choiseul to Grimaldi, 'had he the virtues of peace. As it is, he is not.'—Appendix, No. ii.

which she had been steeped at the close of the Seven Years' War, everything to apprehend from a government which in his eyes had no other rule to guide it than popular caprice or party intrigues,* and everything to hope from the fickleness of the masses, from the instability of power, and the violence of factions in a free state, everything—even the fall of Lord Chatham and the dismemberment of the British Empire. Full of distrust and rancour against an enemy recently victorious, suspicious of its intentions, alarmed at the extension of its power, intensely irritated at not being yet equal to an open rupture with it, he searched the world over with a somewhat desultory violence for the opportunity of injuring it; he sent instructions to the French ambassador at London to omit nothing that could possibly be done 'to overthrow Lord Chatham, the minister whose character gives such just reason for apprehension, and to make it impossible for him to disturb the tranquillity of Europe;' he sent agent after agent to the East Indies and America 'for the purpose of putting the King in a condition to be able to undertake useful operations against his enemies;'† and he could console himself for his fruitless efforts to overthrow Lord Chatham only by watching the decline of his popularity and his health, for the inability of French diplomacy to embarrass Great Britain only by greedily devouring the recital of the difficulties occasioned to Lord Chatham's colleagues by his illness, and the disorders resulting from their incapacity and weakness.

* Duke de Choiseul's letter to the Count de Guerchy, April 13 and 27, 1766. Appendix, No. ii.

† Duke de Choiseul to M. Durand, 15th Sep. 1766; also from the Count du Châtelet to the Duke de Choiseul, and from the latter to the former, 25th April and 11th May, 1768. Appendix, No. ii.

'We are not very anxious, as you may well conceive,' he says, 'to see a firm ministry established in England. I hope that the anarchy will not end quite so quickly. I could wish it to last a century. . . . The rumour runs here that at Wilks's election there was some sort of disturbance in London, in which several lives were lost. I hardly dare hope it is so. The English will never cut each other's throats to the extent we should like.* . . . The reflection naturally suggested by all these proceedings about Wilks is the singularity of the fact that a great power like France should stand in fear of a government so feeble as to be afraid to punish a member sprung from the dregs of its people who has insulted and defied it.'† The pride of the Duke de Choiseul found in all this fresh motives of irritation 'against the pretensions of the English to be rulers of the sea, and to realise for their own benefit the phantom of universal monarchy.'‡ His good sense, however, took no alarm at plans 'too gigantic to be executed.' He refused to believe their power as great as their ambition, and in his eagerness to discover unfavourable omens, he already saw the edifice of British greatness in America and India crumbling away, without being able to discover the precise way in which its demolition was to be accomplished.

'It is a hard matter enough,' he says, 'to govern states in which we live; still more difficult to govern those in America; the difficulty almost amounts to impossibility as respects those in Asia.§ . . . I am extremely surprised that England, which is a mere dot in Europe, should rule over more than a third of

* Choiseul to Châtelet, August 4, 1767.
† Choiseul to Châtelet, May 23, 1768.
‡ Choiseul to Guerchy, July 1768.
§ Choiseul to Durand, August 4, 1767.



America; that its dominion there should have no other object than commerce; that this is so exclusively its object in Asia, as my Lord Clive tell us it is, that the north of Europe should be one of the principal points to which the commercial rapacity of England directs itself; and that English commerce should be desirous to intrude into all parts of Africa and the south of Europe, to such an extent, that were every individual in England engaged in commerce, I should still think England unable to suffice to that which she now has. I shall be told that it is so; true, but as it cannot be, I have the fixed expectation that what I cannot conceive will not be mischievous. The American colonies can be useful to the mother country only in proportion as they derive from England alone materials of their wants, for it is manifest that every distant country which is independent as to its wants will eventually become so in all other matters; and, moreover, of what use would a North American colony be to the mother country, if it did not draw from it the produce of its manufactures? It is necessary, then, that these colonies should be in a state of such total subjection as to be unable to act, even with respect to their own requirements, save in conformity with the will of the mother country. Now this is possible only when the part of the country where it spends money, and quarters its troops in support of its despotism, is small; but a nation having in North America possessions three times as large as France would not, in the long run, be able to prevent their supplying themselves with their own manufactures; it would be obliged to limit itself to furnishing objects of luxury, which must be of short duration, for luxury would infallibly bring about independence. This reasoning, of course, must be spread over a great number of years; but it is certain, that as long as these vast American possessions contribute nothing else but subsidies to the support of the mother country, though English individuals will enrich themselves for awhile by a commercial intercourse with America, the State will perish in default of the means of supporting too vast a power. If, on the contrary, England should desire to impose taxes within her American territories, then, as they would be more extensive, and perhaps more densely peopled

than the mother country—possessed, too, of fisheries, timber, ships, wheat, iron, etc. etc.—they could easily separate from the mother country without any fear of punishment, for England cannot undertake a war for the purpose of chastising them.'*

To these eager motives of mingled spite and hope, to this unquiet faith in the force of things, to these profound but somewhat vague speculations of a mind naturally sagacious and impetuous, M. Durand opposed considerations which, though less elevated, were much more politic. Urged to adverse criticism by the Duke de Choiseul, who feared 'he might be too much wedded to his own opinions,' M. Durand pressed upon his attention both the variety of expedients of which the English Government might yet avail itself to satisfy or subdue the discontented provinces, and the dangers to which France would expose herself by yielding to the temptation of assisting them. He declared it would be imprudent 'to calculate upon any impending revolution in the colonies;'† more imprudent still to foment it, 'since to do so might have the result of handing over the other colonies of Europe to those which by their excessive energy and strength had detached themselves from the parent stem.'‡

'Their secret committee,' writes he to the Duke de Choiseul, 'sent over, in the heat of the quarrel about the Stamp Act, an emissary to London, who, under certain political contingencies, was to proceed to France. I have this fact from a person who lives here; to whom I answered with a smile, and as a receipt in full for his information, that we should never contribute to the formation of a power which

* The Duke de Choiseul to M. Durand, August 24, 1767.

† Durand to the Duke de Choiseul, London, August 30, 1767.

‡ Durand to the Duke de Choiseul, September 3, 1767.



might be formidable to our own colonies; and though it were even to offer us the whole of Acadia wherein to establish a power equal to the defence of our islands, we should prefer peace with England to projects possibly chimerical, and which, if successful, might be turned against ourselves.' *

And M. de Choiseul wrote back forthwith, expressing his approbation of M. Durand's views; 'you have made me,' he says, 'a most sensible reply.'†

We should run great risk of misapprehending both the feelings of the American people and the views of the French Government, were we to attach too much importance to the 'fact' alluded to by M. Durand, and to the prudent reply made by the Duke de Choiseul to his agent's despatch. The Americans were no more desirous than M. Durand himself of the intervention of European powers in their affairs; M. de Choiseul had no mind either to entangle himself irrevocably in the course into which his feelings urged him, or positively to renounce all hopes of ever pursuing it. In the month of October 1767, he had sent Colonel de Kalb

* Durand to the Duke de Choiseul, December 1, 1767.—Squaring his conduct with his letters, M. Durand gave Lord Shelburne, Secretary of State in Lord Chatham's administration, the best advice as to the course to be pursued with regard to the colonies. 'Speaking,' he says, 'of the various matters which had been occupying him, Lord Shelburne mentioned amongst others the affairs of America. I observed to him, these were well worthy of his attention; that it would please us to see them brought to a successful issue, because we were sensible of the danger our colonies would run were those of England to sever the link which bound them to their mother country; that it was time to extend the full privileges of the British constitution to parts too considerable to be overlooked; that to reform the legislation of England in this respect would raise the reputation of the ministry higher, and rest it on grounds far more secure and useful than bold enterprises and conquests.'—Letter to the Duke de Choiseul, August 14, 1766.

† Choiseul to Durand, September 17, 1767.

to America to ascertain the military resources of the colonies, and the secret purposes of their leaders. In the month of January 1768, Colonel de Kalb wrote to him thus from Philadelphia: 'The coolness of the people towards their government renders them free-spoken and licentious; but at bottom they have but little desire to shake off this dominion by the aid of a foreign power. From such aid they would apprehend still greater danger to their liberty.'*

These particulars were very exact. The feeling against the French was equally strong in America and England. A quarrel between France and England would even yet have sufficed to reconcile the colonies to the mother country, to silence the factions which were then disturbing the tranquillity of London, and once more to concentrate the whole strength of the British empire against the common enemy, before the latter was prepared to renew the strife. There was here a great danger, to which M. de Choiseul was perfectly alive, but of which, in his disdain for the ministry, of which Lord Chatham was only the nominal head, he ventured to make light; 'I hope,' he writes, 'there is not in them the energy necessary to enable them to have recourse to this remedy;' and at the very moment he seemed bent upon avoiding every chance of an immediate rupture, he did not hesitate to risk their bitterest displeasure by seizing upon Corsica. 'The public is occupied with America,' he said, 'the government is feeble, we can venture upon a good deal.' To seize upon Corsica was indeed to attempt a good deal; it was putting the patience of a powerful enemy to the severest test that it could possibly endure; but there is

* Letter to the Duke de Choiseul, Jan. 15, 1768.



no pushing forward in this way to the verge of what can be attempted with impunity without experiencing some secret uneasiness. That of M. de Choiseul betrayed itself in his despatches to the Count du Châtelet, the new French ambassador in London: 'I must remind you how essential it is you should keep a vigilant look out upon the movements of the English navy, in order that we may be apprised in time. Above all, you must employ all your ability to produce the impression that the King is seriously desirous of maintaining peace.' Then he recommended the Count to come to an understanding with the Duke of Bedford, the negotiator of the treaty of 1763, and one of the leaders of the ministerial party—a powerful nobleman who, from indolence, had refused a seat in the cabinet in which he had placed his dependents, and who from devotedness to his party occasionally gave them advice which very much resembled commands. 'Say to him,' continued the Duke, 'we cannot possibly imagine that at a moment when he is and ought to be at the helm of English affairs he would possibly permit so pitiful and trumpery a consideration' (the affair of Corsica) 'to be the occasion of a rupture between two nations which have need of peace, and are indebted for it to him. If you succeed in plying him successfully upon this point, I am of opinion, provided he be not changed, that you may induce him to promise you that he will do all in his power to prevent this rupture, especially as you will be able by appealing to the knowledge which he supposes he has of my character, to banish from his mind any distrust and suspicion of me which any one may have attempted to instil into him.' *

* Appendix ii.; the Duke de Choiseul to the Count du Châtelet, June 20, 1768.

The only way in which the English Government manifested its interested sympathy with the Corsicans was by sending them secret succour that was of no avail, and which had no other effect than that of depriving it of the right of reproaching France afterwards for her policy towards America. From day to day the temptation to meddle in American affairs became stronger and stronger in M. de Choiseul's mind, and the Count du Châtelet showed himself both a keener observer and a better courtier than M. Durand, when he wrote to his minister that 'it would be very advisable to have some one on the spot, sufficiently prudent and well-informed, who could fan a fire which is now smouldering and needs little to make it burst into a flame. . . . . Were a man,' he continues, 'of Cromwell's genius to rise up in New York, a republic would be easier to establish than that of which this usurper was the head. Possibly this man exists, possibly he needs nothing more than a few favourable circumstances to place him upon a more extended stage. It is for France and Spain to find the means of developing them.'* M. de Choiseul replied, 'The King has listened with pleasure to the results you give me, in your letter, of the information obtained by you with regard to the English colonies. His Majesty commands me to request you will not leave us in ignorance of anything which may reach you on so interesting a subject.'†

* Appendix ii.; Châtelet to Choiseul, March 12, 1768.

† Choiseul to Châtelet, March 21, 1768.—A few months afterwards, M. du Châtelet obtained from his minister a still more explicit approval of his views. He had on the 9th of Dec. written to M. de Choiseul to this effect: 'In the case of a rupture, even were it an open and premature one, between the colonies and Great Britain, could France and Spain remain idle spectators of an opportunity which in all probability would never occur again? . . . . Before



The news from America had in fact a special interest on more than one ground. It amused Louis XV.; and a despatch well adapted to being read in council on the disturbances in the colonies, was obviously a double god-send to M. de Choiseul. The King found a malicious pleasure in listening to it, for which he was grateful to his minister, and the minister found an opportunity, while reading it, to cause views and temptations to spring up spontaneously in the King's mind, which he might possibly have had some difficulty in directly suggesting to him. In fact, the Duke hardly ever suffered a courier to leave for London, without emphatically reiterating his desire to be made acquainted, even to the smallest details, with every thing relative to the impending revolution in America; and the nature of the questions he was always putting demonstrates both the political importance he attached to these internal dissensions in the British Empire, and the curiosity, in some sort that of an amateur and a connoisseur, with which he followed the different phases of the struggle.

six months have elapsed America will be on fire at every point. The question then is, whether the colonies have the means of feeding it without the aid of a foreign war, and whether France and Spain should run the risk of taking an active part in fomenting the conflagration, and making it inextinguishable, or whether it would be more their policy to leave it to itself, at the risk of its going out for the want of fuel, and the means of spreading.' On the 20th Dec., the Duke de Choiseul replied: 'Your despatch of the ninth of this month, sir, is replete with views as delicate as they are comprehensive and profound on the actual relations between England and her colonies, and on the two courses between which, at this conjuncture, France and Spain might elect. I will communicate your suggestions to the Court of Madrid: I have already laid them before the King, who thoroughly appreciates their sagacity and weight, and who is sensible of the attention which, with so enlightened and unflagging a zeal, you bestow upon matters that so deeply concern his Majesty's service.'

He was very well served by the representatives of France in London. M. Durand, and after him M. du Châtelet, or in the absence of the latter, M. Francis, his first secretary, were incessantly on the search for ideas and news. Their correspondence abounds in particulars relating to the history, position, forces, hopes, and desires of the colonies, particulars derived from the best sources, the writings and conversations of Franklin, the reports of M. de Pontleroy (an intelligent naval officer, whom M. de Choiseul had commissioned in 1764 and 1766 to visit the colonies secretly under the name of Beaulieu); from communications with merchants in the city, indiscreet remarks of members of the opposition, American newspapers; and there are still to be found, in the archives of the office of Foreign Affairs, pamphlets, reports of assemblies and meetings, and political sermons, which were annexed in great profusion to their despatches. They did not confine themselves to stating what they heard; they also said what they thought. M. de Choiseul was fond of intellectual activity, and he encouraged his agents to forward him their views as to the future, their projects of alliance, their schemes of war and plans of campaigns, but without ever suffering them for any great length of time to engross his active and restless mind. They eagerly availed themselves of his encouraging permission to communicate freely with him.

At one moment it was M. Durand who was proposing to his minister an entirely new system of waging war against Great Britain, which he said he had formerly from Lord Bolingbroke. It was not, according to that nobleman's view, by stripping England of her distant possessions, that it would be ever possible to reduce her. Her colonies were hardly better than parasitic



branches which she could do without, and 'which might be severed from her without stopping the circulation essential to her life.' The only aim should be to ravage them, to draw off the naval forces from the mother country by a variety of attacks upon them, so at last to leave her shores unguarded, and make her invasion easy. England would be found much less strong than 'her imposing exterior' gave reason to suppose; 'her constitution had become too regular for perilous times; the number of springs she had to put in motion before she could handle her resources was too many. . . . . her generals had little left to their discretion, and would not dare to act upon their own responsibility; her finances would immediately be thrown into confusion . . . . attacked in her vital parts, she would be without force and without the capacity of action.'* 'In spite of the authority of my Lord Bolingbroke,' replied M. de Choiseul, with great good sense, 'there would be many objections to make and many explanations to ask on the subject of your despatch of August 24. Besides, it is beyond dispute that the ideas with respect to America, whether military or political, have materially changed within thirty years.'†

Sometimes, again, it was M. Francis who, in the anticipation of an impending war between France and England, and under the apprehension that 'if great baits were not held out to the Americans, their cupidity would make them prefer the momentary advantage of the prizes they might make upon us to obtaining their independence,' was collecting materials for preparing a commercial treaty of a nature to give them,

* Durand to Choiseul, August 24, 1766.

† Choiseul to Durand, 1766.

the instant a rupture occurred, an interest sufficiently powerful to detach them at once from the mother country, and hurry forward an event which must sooner or later happen.*

In 1769, it was M. du Châtelet proposing to France and Spain the sacrifice of the old colonial system, and the free admission of American produce into the dependencies of the two crowns, as the most effective method of promoting the revolution which menaced Great Britain; † M. de Choiseul caught up the ambassador's idea with great eagerness; he developed it with energy in the cabinet; he submitted it to the examination of the chamber of commerce; he communicated it to the Spanish Government. But the latter refused its sanction, 'not choosing,' said the Marquis de Grimaldi, 'to augment the power and prosperity of a neighbour already too formidable, and which, should it separate from the mother country would be dangerous by the sagacity, persistency, and stedfastness of the measures it would take for carrying out plans of conquest which might be naturally enough attributed to it.' ‡ 'I must confess to you,' wrote M. de Choiseul to M. du Châtelet, when sending him the reply of the court of Madrid, 'that the objections of the Spanish ministers appear to me reasonable enough.' § And this proposal which the French Government had embraced with so much levity, was with the same levity abandoned. ‖

A little later, it was the author of a paper on the opposition made by the French settlers in Louisiana

* Choiseul to Châtelet, July 15, 1768.

† Châtelet to Choiseul, Jan. 28, 1769.

‡ The Marquis d'Ossun to Choiseul, February 20, 1769.

§ Choiseul to Châtelet, March 14, 1769.

‖ Choiseul to Châtelet, Feb. 6, 1769; Ossun to Choiseul, Feb. 27, 1769; Choiseul to Châtelet, Feb. 24, 1769.



to the cession of the colony to Spain, who indicated an infallible method, according to him, of putting an end to the discontent of these new subjects of Charles IV., 'of alluring the confidence of the English colonies,' and arming them against their government. 'Give,' said he, 'liberty to Louisiana. Throw open New Orleans to all nations and religions.'

Finally, it was M. Abeille, Secretary-General of Commerce, who, pushing this idea much farther, urged the complete emancipation of the French colonies, in a paper, which the first clerk in the Foreign Office summed up in this way when laying it before M. de Choiseul:—*

'It would be very difficult, perhaps impossible, to defend and preserve the colonies. It is, moreover, a permanent burden on France to have colonies. The thing to be aimed at is to diminish the artificial strength of the English, and to relieve France of the burdens that obstruct the developement of her natural strength. The English colonies augment the strength of England. The colonies of France weaken her. The twofold interest of France, then, would be to get rid of its colonies and to bring about a total breach between England and her colonies. There is a mode of arriving at this double result, and that is to grant the French colonies a complete independence as respects both their internal administration and their commerce, so that the only tie between France and them would be fealty and a common interest, like that which links the Hanseatic cities to the empire. It would then be easy to exasperate the English colonies against their mother country through the independence of our own. Our colonies would thus cease to be a drag upon us, and they would be an enormous drag upon England. If we wait until the English deprive us of them by force of arms, they will become an additional source of strength to them, both by their productions, and by the

* See Appendix ii.; Note of the Abbé Delaville, first clerk in the Foreign Office, Dec. 31, 1769.

facilities they will give for procrastinating the emancipation of the English colonies. The conclusion at which the paper arrives is the expediency of invading England.'

Had M. de Choiseul remained at the head of affairs, what would have become of all these plans which he received so complacently and forgot so easily? What allurements would he have held out to the English colonies to engage them in an alliance with France and Spain? To what extent would he have supported their revolt? How far would he have been able to engage Louis XV. and Charles IV. in the support of his plans? This, of course, I cannot divine. But what seems quite certain is, that all these projects of war and intervention vanished with him (1770), and were not revived until five years afterwards by M. de Vergennes. I think that this long inaction of the French government was, on the whole, lucky for America; public opinion had advanced less quickly there than in France, and several years had yet to pass over before it could reach the same point. The correspondence of Franklin, then agent for Pennsylvania, Georgia, and New Jersey, in London, furnishes the proof of it. He was extremely flattered by the marked attentions which he received from the French diplomatists; in all probability, he discerned in his relations with them a resource for the future, and, doubtless, took care not to forfeit it by any excessive reserve that would discourage their curious enquiries into American affairs; but their zeal for the cause of which he was the representative, nevertheless excited in him a secret distrust, and he made it a capital point not—save in the last extremity—to engage in any serious negotiation with the enemies of his race.

The person he was the most unreserved and intimate with was his natural son William Franklin. He was



fond of communicating to him every detail, which tended either to indicate the important position he was taking in the world, or to increase his influence and satisfy their common ambition. Appointed in 1762 by the crown governor of New Jersey, thanks to the influence of his father, William was a Tory by position and instinct. But this was no great crime at that time in Franklin's eyes, and nothing had yet happened to shake a domestic intimacy which political dissensions afterwards destroyed, when on August 28th he wrote to his son as follows :—

'He (Monsieur Durand) is extremely curious to inform himself in the affairs of America; pretends to have great esteem for me, on account of the abilities shown in my examination; has desired to have all my political writings, invited me to dine with him, was very inquisitive, treated me with great civility, makes me visits, etc. I fancy that intriguing nation would like very well to meddle on occasion, and blow up the coals between Britain and her colonies; but I hope we shall give them no opportunity.'*

Franklin desired much more than he expected it. He had no confidence in the prudence of the English government and people; he foresaw a separation, and dreaded it,† not for the colonies, which he thought

* Franklin to William Franklin, August 28, 1767; Franklin's Works, vol. vii. p. 357.—On the 30th of Sep. 1769, returning from Paris, where he had found public attention very much occupied with the dispute between England and her colonies, Franklin (ibid. p. 459) still wrote to Samuel Cooper: 'The whole of Europe (except Britain) appears to be on our side of the question. But Europe has its reasons. It fancies itself in some danger from the growth of British power, and would be glad to see it divided against itself. Our prudence will, I hope, long postpone the satisfaction our enemies expect from our dissensions.'—Franklin's Works, vol. viii. p. 459.

† Franklin's Works, vol. vii. p. 334; Letter to Lord Kames, April 11, 1767, vol. iv. p. 268; Letter to W. Strahan.

quite equal to take care of themselves, but for the King, towards whom he still felt the devotedness of a faithful subject,* and for Great Britain, which he loved almost as much as America, and where he would willingly have terminated his career in the service of a well-advised government. His patriotism was as complicated as his functions. The agent of Georgia, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, in London, and at the head of the general Post Office in America, he was, at one and the same time, a representative of colonial discontent and an English official; there was a moment when there was even a question of appointing him Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, then filled by Lord Hillsborough;† and he showed himself quite ready to accept this post, comformably to his triple maxim, 'never to ask a place, never to refuse a place, never to resign one.'‡ By position, therefore, he was an almost impartial intermediary between England and America, a peace-maker as tenacious as far-sighted, whose daily attempts at success in no degree trammeled his liberty of thought, and whose melancholy anticipations were unable to relax his perseverance. This was one of the great marks of his superiority; he could see into the future and live in the present. The separation he expected might probably be still remote; why should he not, while labouring to avoid it now, facilitate its progress, and prolong the peace of the world? Such were still the sentiments of Franklin at the time of the Duke de Choiseul's fall; his American fellow-countrymen were still much behind him in their

* Franklin's Works, vol. vii. pp. 361, 402, 439.

† Ibid. vol. vii. p. 377; Letter to W. Franklin, Jan. 9th, 1768; also p. 407.

‡ Ibid. p. 496; Letter to his sister, Mrs. Mecom, Dec. 13, 1770.



prescience of what was to come: 'That no man,' said Washington, 'indeed, should scruple or hesitate a moment to use arms in defence of so valuable a blessing, is clearly my opinion. But yet arms, I would beg leave to add, should be the last resource, the *dernier ressort*;'* and it seems doubtful if the idea of independence had yet crossed his mind.

Among the leaders of the colonial opposition, Samuel Adams alone had come to the determination to shake off the yoke of Great Britain, and from the time of the occupation of Boston by the English troops in 1768, he pursued his design with the adroit prudence of a politician and the inflexible stubbornness of a puritan; but even in Boston itself he was an isolated phenomenon. Neither John Adams, nor Otis, nor Hancock, shared his republican views; and in 1770 the assembly of Massachusetts was still moderate and prudent enough to appoint Franklin its colonial agent in London, whose conciliatory disposition and unwillingness to clash with the home government were well known, and had even excited some suspicion in the minds of the least sober-minded patriots.

A most unwarranted distrust. No one had, as regarded the rights of the colonies, and the necessity of not compromising them by the concession of any important principle, a more fixed opinion; no one so well understood how nicely to reconcile the discharge of the official duties entrusted to him by the colonies with a regard for his own personal position. This position, in fact, was daily increasing in importance. Franklin had henceforth to speak in the name of four colonies; he felt he was continuously supported and urged on by

* Washington's Writings, vol. ii. p. 351.

his constituents; and while the good will of the British government became a matter of more indifference to him, as well as a thing more difficult to preserve, the hostility of parliament towards the provinces was every day more and more marked, the insolence of ministers increased, the debates grew more and more bitter, and Franklin became more zealous for a cause of which he was the organ, less kindly disposed towards England, less afflicted at the prospect of a separation. But, even after this change in his outward attitude and inward feeling, he for a long while played the same part of tranquiliser of the Americans, and sound adviser of the ministers of George III. 'I,' thus Franklin was constantly writing to his friends, 'cannot but wish to see much patience and the utmost discretion in our general conduct, that the fatal period may be postponed, and that whenever this catastrophe shall happen, it may appear to all mankind that the fault has not been ours.' * And in 1773, three months before the tea-riot in Boston, at the time when the passions and views of Samuel Adams were beginning to manifest themselves publicly in New England, he could still write:

'By the Boston newspapers, there seems to be among us some violent spirits, who are for an immediate rupture. But I trust the general prudence of our country will see that by our growing strength we advance fast to a situation in which our claims must be allowed; that by a premature struggle we may be crippled, and kept down another age; that, as between friends every affront is not worth a duel, and between nations every injury not worth a war, so between the governed and governing every mistake in government, every encroachment on right, is not worth a rebellion.'

* Franklin's Works, vol. vii. p. 522; Letter to the Corresponding Committee in Massachusetts, May 15, 1771.



'It is in my opinion sufficient for the present, that we hold them forth on all occasions, not giving up any of them, using at the same time every means to make them generally understood and valued by the people; cultivating a harmony among the colonies, that their union in the same sentiments may give them greater weight; remembering withal, that this Protestant country (our mother, though lately an unkind one) is worth preserving, and that her weight in the scale of Europe, and her safety in a great degree, may depend on our union with her.'*

But while showing himself thus intent on the maintenance of the European equilibrium, he was at work establishing a common concert between the Americans; while deploring the future dismemberment of the British empire, he rejoiced at the institution of committees of correspondence between the colonies; he approved the principle of that great defensive alliance of which Jefferson and his friends had laid the foundation at Williamsburgh,† and he urged his constituents to make it more and more binding on all. He was the first officially to propose calling a general congress:

'And,' he says, 'as this want of concert would defeat the expectation of general redress, that otherwise might be justly formed, perhaps it would be best and fairest for the colonies, in a general congress now in peace to be assembled, or by means of the correspondence lately proposed, after a full and solemn assertion and declaration of their rights, to engage firmly with each other, that they will never grant aids to the crown in any general war, till those rights are recognised by the King and both Houses of Parliament.'‡

For the better cognition of these rights, it became

* Franklin's Works, vol. viii. p. 79; Letter to Winthrop, July 25, 1773.

† Ibid. vol. viii. p. 55; Letter to Thos. Cushing, July 7, 1773.

‡ Ibid. vol. viii. p. 63.

necessary to define them precisely. This was a very difficult task. There was, in fact, great confusion in the views of the Americans on this point, and their constitutional maxims varied a good deal, according to the demands of the discussion, and the character of the minds employed in it. Occasionally they had made a distinction between taxes, having exclusively for their object the protection of commerce, and those directly or indirectly intended for the raising of revenue, conceding to parliament the right of imposing the former, but reserving the latter to the provincial assemblies alone; this was the view taken by John Dickenson in his 'Letters from a Pennsylvanian Farmer' in 1767, and was one which had for a long while prevailed in America. At other times, suppressing all distinction they recognized in principle the supremacy of parliament over the colonies, but without admitting that they could be taxed by a body in which they were not represented. This opinion had been developed in a pamphlet published by James Otis in 1764. Then, again, there were others who entirely denied the supremacy of parliament, and conceded to the joint authority of the king and provincial legislatures only, the right of making laws binding on America; but there were only a few adventurous minds that went as far as this, to the great regret of Franklin, who, as far back as 1768,* had brought himself to regard as dangerous any theory less radical, and any form of expression which could bring it into disrepute.

'And, in the meantime, I could wish that such expressions as the supreme authority of Parliament, the subordinacy of our assemblies to the Parliament, and the like, which in

* Franklin's Works, vol. vii. p. 391; Letter to W. Franklin, March 13, 1768.



reality mean nothing, if our assemblies with the king have a true legislative authority, should not be made use of . . . . To me, those bodies (the Lords and Commons) seem to have been long encroaching on the rights of their and our sovereign, assuming too much of his authority, and betraying his interests. By our constitutions he is, with his plantation parliaments, the sole legislator of his American subjects.* . . . In fact, the British Empire is not a single state; it comprehends many; and though the Parliament of Great Britain has arrogated to itself the power of taxing the colonies, it has no more right to do so, than it has to tax Hanover. We have the same king, but not the same legislatures.†

'This was the only orthodox and tenable doctrine,'‡ says Jefferson in his memoirs. A doctrine yet very bold for the time, when, in 1774, a few days after the solemn fast which had so powerfully electrified the Virginians, and six months before the battle of Lexington, he set it forth in a draught of instructions intended for the delegates of Virginia to the general congress, the convocation of which he and his friends had recommended. Detained at a considerable distance from Williamsburg by illness, Jefferson had been compelled to send this paper to the chairman of the electoral assembly with a request that he would communicate it to his colleagues. But even those who acknowledged its intrinsic merit regarded it as out of bounds and season. It did not receive even the compliment of being read in public, and Jefferson subsequently acknowledged that it was premature; 'the leap,' he says, 'I proposed being too long, as yet, for the mass of our citizens.'§ Published, nevertheless,

* Franklin's Works, vol. vii. pp. 476, 467; Letter to Cooper, June 8, 1770.

† Ibid. vol. iv. p. 27; Letter to M. de Bourg, Oct. 2, 1770.

‡ Jefferson's Works; *Autobiography*, vol. i. p. 8.

§ Ibid. p. 124; *Autobiography*, Note C.

under the title of 'Summary view of the Rights of English America,' it caused much sensation. In his own colony this pamphlet was what first brought him into great repute; in England, it procured for him the honour of being put into a proscription-list, in which were to be found the names of John Hancock, the two Adamses, Peyton Randolph, and Patrick Henry.* Jefferson, however, had some right not to look upon himself as a factiously disposed person. His programme of 1774 contained this phrase, 'it is neither our wish nor our interest to separate from England.'†

But after the closing of the port of Boston, and the revocation of the charter of Massachusetts, avowals of this kind found secret opponents in New England, now daily becoming more numerous and more determined. The question of a rupture was already pending in the minds of the prime movers, though as yet in a very indefinite way. 'Their ideas are as many as faces,'‡ wrote Adams in sincere perplexity, having just been chosen delegate from his colony to congress. 'For my own part, I am at a loss, totally at a loss, to guess what we shall do when we get there

* Jefferson's Works, p. 9.

† American Archives, 4th series, vol. i. pp. 690, 699. The resolutions adopted on the 18th of July, 1774, by the General Assembly of the county of Fairfax, on the recommendation of a committee, of which Washington was chairman, expressed the same sentiments in almost the same terms: 'It is our greatest wish and inclination, as well as interest, to continue our connection with, and dependence upon, the British Government; but though we are its subjects, we will use every means which heaven hath given us to prevent our becoming its slaves.' — Washington's *Writings*, vol. ii. p. 490.

‡ John Adams's Works, vol. ii. p. 338; Diary, June 20, 1774.



(Philadelphia); but I hope to be there taught.'* He distrusted himself; he had no great confidence in the wisdom and energy of his generation, and recollecting the fate of Hampden, Sidney, and Harrington, he showed himself by no means eager for the perilous honour of accomplishing a revolution on its behalf. He could have wished to put off the collision while preparing the means of resistance; and to satisfy these inconsistent purposes he saw no other way than that of instituting annual congresses, in which men might be trained up capable one day of successfully administering American affairs.† It was, in fact, in consequence of this that the resolute and far-sighted Joseph Hawley gave him a friendly rebuke for his want of courage and consistency: 'You are pleased to say that extremities and ruptures it is our policy to avoid. I agree with it, if any other means will answer our ends, or if it is plain that they would not. . . . But pray, sir, do not you imagine that such an institution would breed extremities and ruptures? It appears to me most clear that the institution, if formed, must be discontinued, or we must defend it with ruptures.'‡

What Adams saw on his journey in his way to congress with a deputation from his colony was not of a nature to relieve him from his perplexity. In Connecticut the representatives of Massachusetts were received with more warmth and greater demonstrations than had ever been made for the highest officers of the crown; large numbers of men on horseback escorted

* John Adams's Works, vol. ix. p. 339; Letter to James Warren, June 25th, 1774.

† Ibid.

‡ Ibid. vol. ix. p. 343; Hawley to Adams, July 25th, 1774.

them on their way; the population of the towns turned out to meet them; wherever they made their entry it was amidst the ringing of the bells and through excited and sympathising crowds; they heard on every side of them expressions of sympathy for the persecutions which Boston had suffered in defence of the common cause; they everywhere received pledges that congress should be supported, whatever its decision might be; on every side the leaders of the people encouraged them to act with energy.* In New York, on the contrary, the patriots themselves were more profuse of exhortations to prudence than of marks of enthusiasm; and, under the date of August 22, 1774, Adams inserted in his private journal the following note:

'Mr. McDougall gave a caution to avoid every expression here which looked like an allusion to the last appeal. He says there is a powerful party here, who are intimidated by fears of a civil war, and they have been induced to acquiesce by assurances that there was no danger, and that a peaceful cessation of commerce would effect relief. Another party, he says, are intimidated lest the levelling spirit of the New England colonies should propagate itself into New York. Another party are prompted by episcopalian prejudices against New England. Another party are merchants largely concerned in navigation, and therefore afraid of non-importation, non-consumption, and non-exportation agreements. Another party are those who are looking up to Government for favours. Phil Livingston is a great, rough, rapid mortal. There is no holding any conversation with him. He blusters away; says if England should turn us adrift, we should instantly go to civil wars among ourselves, to determine which colony should govern all the rest; seems to dread New England, the levelling spirit, etc. Hints were thrown out of

* John Adams's Works, vol. ii. 341, 343; Diary for August 15-17, 1774.



the Goths and Vandals; mention was made of our hanging the Quakers, etc.' *

At Philadelphia their reception was rather warmer; but there, too, the Massachusetts delegates had to hear themselves reproached with the insubordinate spirit of their province, its democratic traditions, and its old religious intolerance. At their very first interchange of opinions with their fellow members of congress, and before any formal meeting had taken place, they were in a position to ascertain that the commercial colonies of the centre, in which the Quaker or foreign element predominated, would be the most difficult to move in favour of their cause, and that it was from aristocratic Virginia Boston might expect the most sympathy and support.

'These gentlemen from Virginia appear to be the most spirited and consistent of any,' observed John Adams in his journal. 'Harrison said he would have come on foot rather than not come. Bland said he would have gone, upon this occasion, if it had been to Jericho. . . . He told us that Colonel Washington made the most eloquent speech at the Virginia Convention that ever was made.' Says he, 'I will raise one thousand men, subsist them at my own expense, and march myself at their head for the relief of Boston.' †

Such was still in the colonies the diversity of political opinions at the moment when the congress of 1774 assembled. Patrick Henry alone had the audacity to come forward as an avowed revolutionist. Congress could not avoid, at its very first sitting, entering upon a serious question, which, even after her independence, for a long while divided America, and which now involved the existence of the old

* John Adams's Works, vol. ii. pp. 350, 351.

† Ibid. vol. ii. pp. 359, 362; August 30, 1774.

colonial system. Should they vote in the new assembly by provinces or representatives? Should they confer indiscriminately on all the colonies, small as well as great, the same degree of influence over the common interests, or should they assign to each of them a number of votes in proportion to its population? Ought the colonies to be regarded as small political societies having still an existence of their own, and equal rights under one and the same master; or as the simple elements of a new society, from which every ancient right had disappeared, leaving nothing but citizens in their place? Patrick Henry spoke to this effect: 'Government is dissolved. . . . We are in a state of nature, sir. . . . All distinctions are thrown down. . . . All America is thrown into one mass. . . . Where are your landmarks, your boundaries of colonies? . . . The distinctions between Virginians, Pennsylvanians, New Yorkers, and New Englanders, are no more. I am not a Virginian but an American.' *

The idea of a republic one and indivisible never became popular in the United States. In 1774, it shocked, not only the provincial prejudices of the members of congress, but also their sentiments of fidelity to the crown and their prudence: 'a little colony had its all at stake as well as a great one!' exclaimed Major Sullivan, in reply to the Virginian agitator.† 'Could I suppose,' said Jay in the same debate, 'that we came to frame an American constitution, instead of endeavouring to correct the faults of an old one? I can't yet think that all government is at an end. The measure of arbitrary power is not

* John Adams's Works, vol. ii. pp. 366, 367.

† Ibid. p. 366.



full, and I think it must run over, before we undertake to frame a new constitution.' *

The voting by colonies was provisionally adopted. The discussions in congress were ordered to be conducted with closed doors as a prudent precaution, which for a long time concealed from the world the divisions in this assembly, gravely important divisions, turning successively on all points,—the nature of the rights to be defended, the object to be pursued, the means to be employed. The acts of congress were a series of transactions laboriously discussed, which fully satisfied no one, but which permitted America to move on in apparent unity. The more determined submitted to express a desire for reconciliation, to sign a humble petition to the King, and even to recognise, in a qualified degree, the supremacy of parliament; the more timid were induced to sign an agreement authorising non-importation, to approve the resistance of Boston to the last acts of parliament, to declare, that if any attempt were made to execute them by force, it would be the duty of America to support the inhabitants of Massachusetts; and, finally, to recommend the assembling of a new congress in May 1775, if the grievances of the country were not by this time redressed.†

The adoption by the whole continent of the cause of Boston, this was the capital point for the defenders of American liberty; and, on receiving tidings of this great step made by the colonies in the path of resistance, Franklin, then in London, easily consoled himself for the slight which his doctrine on American rights had received from congress. He had now, for many months, given up all notion of acting as a mode-

* John Adams's Works, vol. ii. p. 368. † Ibid. pp. 365, 402.

rator. Having to support, before the privy council, a petition to the King, in which the assembly of Massachusetts demanded the recall of Hutchinson, governor of the provinces, he had been treated in the most insulting manner by Wedderburn, the solicitor-general. Designated as an 'incendiary' and an intriguer, accused of having 'stolen' the documents on which the complaint against Hutchinson was founded, exposed for several hours to the laughter of the lords of the council, deprived of his office of post-master-general, he had remained unmoved, but he had become irreconcilable: 'I do not suffer myself,' he said, 'to be disturbed and tormented by a desire for vengeance; however, I am not insensible to insults.' Accordingly, one of the warmest allies of Samuel Adams, Josiah Quincy Adams, who was travelling in England on the business of his party, had soon an occasion of writing to his friends in Boston: —

'Dr. Franklin is an American in heart and soul; you may trust him; his ideas are not contracted within the narrow limits of exemption from taxes, but are extended upon the broad scale of total emancipation. He is explicit and bold upon the subject, and his hopes are as sanguine as my own of the triumph of liberty in America.'* But Franklin had to make sure of the support of the English opposition, to manage the scruples of the American public, and to watch over his own safety. He negotiated to the end, no longer as a peacemaker but as an enemy, who, on the verge of coming to a rupture, continues to treat for the purpose of putting law and opinion on his side. When, in the month of January 1775, he undertook to confer with

* Franklin's Life and Works, vol. i. p. 372; November 27, 1774.



Lord Chatham on the means of healing the quarrel, I suspect he felt quite confident it was in vain to look for them, and that he would have been greatly annoyed to find them. Mr. Galloway, one of his American friends, supposed he had hit upon a plan: —

'I have not heard,' wrote Franklin to him, 'what objections were made to the plan in the congress, nor would I make more than this one, that when I consider the extreme corruption prevalent among all orders of men in this old rotten state, and the glorious public virtue so predominant in our rising country, I cannot but apprehend more mischief than benefit from a closer union. I fear they will drag us after them in all the plundering wars, which their desperate circumstances, injustice, and rapacity may prompt them to undertake; and their wide-wasting prodigality and profusion is a gulf that will swallow up every aid we may distress ourselves to afford them.'

'Here numberless and needless places, enormous salaries, pensions, perquisites, bribes, groundless quarrels, foolish expeditions, false accounts or no accounts, contracts and jobs, devour all revenue, and produce continual necessity in the midst of natural plenty. I apprehend, therefore, that to unite us intimately will only be to corrupt and poison us also. It seems like Mezentius coupling and binding together the dead and the living.'

Then, yielding perhaps to the influence of habit, or remembering that Mr. Galloway was accused in the colonies of supplying the British government with information respecting the views and proceedings of the popular party, he adds: * 'However, I would try anything and bear anything, that can be borne with safety to our just liberties, rather than engage in a war with such relations, unless compelled to it by dire necessity in our own defence.'

* Franklin's Life and Works, vol. viii. p. 146; Letter to Joseph Galloway, February 25, 1775.

On the 21st March, 1775, Franklin made his escape furtively from that old England which now only inspired him with hatred and contempt, to go and take his place in the councils of America, henceforth his one and only country. On disembarking, he found that the war had already broken out between the colonies and England. The battle of Lexington* had been fought a few days before his arrival.

'This accident,' wrote Jefferson to Dr. Small, when communicating the news of the fight, 'has cut off our last hope of reconciliation, and a frenzy of revenge seems to have seized all ranks of people.' † And yet such was still the bearing of the young Virginian towards Great Britain, and his dislike of the disorders and perils of a revolutionary crisis that, even three months later, he had not abandoned all hope of opening the eyes of the British government by his indirect suggestions.‡ More martial by nature and by vocation, Colonel Washington had no less a repugnance to

* April 19, 1775. General Gage, the Governor of Massachusetts, having ordered a detachment of the garrison of Boston to go and destroy a depôt of military stores which the popular party had established at Concord, the English soldiers found the population all up and ready to resist them. They had effected their retreat with great difficulty and considerable loss, and been pursued by the rebels until they were under the guns of Boston. At the sound of this conflict, the population of New England ran to arms; the American trained bands laid siege to Boston, and came to blows with the garrison in the glorious battle of Bunker's Hill (June 16, 1775). A few days afterwards, Washington, appointed Commander-in-chief of the continental forces, devoted himself to the task of metamorphosing these insurgent militiamen into soldiers.

† Jefferson's Works, vol. i. p. 199; Letter to Dr. Small, May 7, 1775.

‡ Ibid. pp. 200, 204; Letter to John Randolph, August 25 and November 29, 1775.



separation. At the very moment of his going to take the chief command of the patriots, whom the cannon at Lexington had summoned to arms, he made it a point of honour to speak of the enemy's soldiers only as the '*ministerial troops.* For we do not,' he said, 'nor can we yet prevail upon ourselves to call them the King's troops.' *

John Adams had now got beyond this point. Emerged from his long uncertainty, he had been since advancing without hesitation in the path where Samuel Adams and Joseph Hawley had led the way, and was disquieted at seeing the reluctance of the country to enter it. From Philadelphia, where he had taken his seat in the new congress which had met on May 10th, in pursuance of the recommendations of the congress of 1774, he thus wrote in low spirits to the chairman of the finance committee of his colony:—

'It would be a relief to my mind, if I could write freely to you concerning the sentiments, principles, facts, and arguments which are laid before us in congress; but injunctions and engagements of honour render this impossible. What I learn out of doors among citizens, gentlemen, and persons of all denominations, is not so sacred. I find that the general sense abroad is, to prepare for a vigorous defensive war, but at the same time to keep open the door of reconciliation. . . . I am myself as fond of reconciliation, if we could reasonably entertain hopes of it upon a constitutional basis, as any man. . . . . But I think the cancer is too deeply rooted, and too far spread, to be cured by anything short of cutting it out entire.

'We have ever found by experience that petitions, negotiations — everything which holds out to the people hopes of a

* Washington's Writings, vol. ii. p. 406; Letter to George William Fairfax, May 31, 1775.

reconciliation without bloodshed, is greedily grasped at and relied on; and they cannot be persuaded to think that it is so necessary to prepare for war as it really is. Hence our present scarcity of power, &c.

'However, this continent is a vast, unwieldly machine. We cannot force events. We must suffer people to take their own way in many cases, when we think it leads wrong; hoping, however, and believing that our liberty and felicity will be preserved in the end, though not in the speediest and surest manner. In my opinion, powder and artillery are the most efficacious, sure, and infallible conciliatory measures we can adopt.' *

In spite of his judicious reflections on the impracticability of forcing events, John Adams could not bring himself to dissemble or to be silent. What he wrote to his friends in Massachusetts upon the ill results of petitions and negotiations, he developed more at length in congress to the great scandal of patriots more prudent or timid than himself; and by the unreasonable outbursts of his zeal, he, at that time, checked more than he accelerated the march of public opinion. A bitter and lasting controversy soon sprang up between him and John Dickenson, one of the delegates from Pennsylvania, and the principal representative of a conciliatory policy in congress, a man greatly considered on account of his large fortune, his high character for probity, ability, and patriotism, his long and intimate acquaintance with the tone of feeling in the central provinces; a really important person, too much made of by his colleagues, perhaps a little spoilt by the deference with which his opinions were habitually listened to; fastidious and quick to take offence. His conscience, his prudence, his pride, all revolted against the resistance which the obscure representative of a

* Works of John Adams, vol. ix. p. 356, 357.



turbulent province opposed to his efforts to divert the revolution, or at all events to make it appear lawful in the eyes of all men. He considered it a point of honour to combat the tendencies represented by Adams; and these premature disputes materially contributed to hinder congress from throwing aside a purely defensive policy as promptly as the interests of the country required.

This policy was in the ascendant in that assembly when Jefferson took his seat in it for the first time,* in the place of Peyton Randall, whose duty, as speaker of the Chamber of Burgesses, had summoned him back to Williamsburgh. After much hesitation, congress had decided on ordering the colonies to be put in a state of defence,† on authorising the formation of a provisional government in Massachusetts,‡ on taking under its direction the army which had spontaneously organised itself around Boston,§ and on appointing Washington its commander-in-chief.‖ But wishing at the same time to confine the war within the province where it had originated, and to preserve a scrupulously constitutional character to the resistance of America; it recommended the city of New York not to oppose the landing of the English troops expected at that place,¶ and to respect the authority of the royal governor. It likewise resolved that a fresh petition should be presented to the King.**

Whatever might have been Jefferson's opinion of this somewhat wavering course, he did not fall into the same fault as John Adams. Young, animated, sociable, unassuming, always on the alert, ever ready to put his

* June 21, 1775. † May 26, 1775. ‡ June 9, 1775.
§ June 12, 1775. ‖ June 15, 1775. ¶ May 15, 1775.
** May 26, 1775.

pen at the disposal of congress, and to sacrifice the ornaments or over-warmth of his style in order to smooth away objections, he soon became very popular in the assembly, where he was already advantageously known as the author of a clever pamphlet on the rights of America, and of an able answer adopted by the house of burgesses of Virginia to Lord North's plan for reconciling the colonies.* He had not taken his seat in congress more than eight days when he was chosen a member of the committee appointed to frame a declaration of the causes of having recourse to arms:—

'I prepared,' thus he himself tells us, 'a draught of the declaration committed to us. It was too strong for Mr. Dickenson. He still retained the hope of reconciliation with the mother country, and was unwilling it should be lessened by offensive statements. He was so honest a man, and so able a one, that he was greatly indulged even by those who could not feel his scruples. We therefore requested him to take the paper, and put it into a form he could approve. He did so, preparing an entire new statement, and preserving of the former only the last four paragraphs, and half of the preceding one.'†

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* After Parliament's rejection of the plan of reconciliation prepared by Lord Chatham and Franklin (January 1775), the Prime Minister, Lord North, had obtained the sanction of Parliament to another scheme, the real object of which was to divide the colonies by establishing separate negotiations with each of them, individually. The Assembly of Virginia, being the first called upon to give an opinion on Lord North's insidious proposals, rejected them, and instructed Jefferson to draw up a public declaration, setting forth the grounds of their decision, June 1775. This document had so great a success that a month afterwards, when Congress, in its turn, had to make a response to Lord North's proposals (July 22, 1775), Jefferson was appointed to draw up the reply (July 28, 1775).

† Jefferson's Works, vol. i. p. 11; Autobiography, July 6, 1765.



The declaration thus amended was approved of by the chamber, reported to congress, and adopted by it.

The petition to the King had still to be drawn up. Mr. Dickenson laid the greatest possible stress on the importance of its taking the form, not of a collective act of the congress, a body not recognised by the British Government, but of a humble address signed by the members as private individuals.

'Congress,' again remarks Jefferson, 'gave a signal proof of their indulgence to Mr. Dickenson, and of their great desire not to go too fast for any respectable part of our body, in permitting him to draw their second petition to the King according to his own ideas, and passing it with scarcely any amendment. The disgust against this humility was general; and Mr. Dickenson's delight at its passage was the only circumstance which reconciled them to it. The vote being passed, although further observation on it was out of order, he could not refrain from rising and expressing his satisfaction, and concluded by saying: "There is but one word, Mr. President, in the paper which I disapprove, and that is the word *Congress*;"* on which Ben Harrison rose and said: "There is but one word in the paper, Mr. President, of which I approve, and that is the word *Congress*."'

In the midst of these rather idle discussions on the more or less warmth of this or that state-paper, Franklin remained silent, having little taste for disputation, and still less confidence in its efficacy; but he left no one in ignorance of his sentiments, not even his English friends, and, as if to warn them of his not heartily concurring with the petition of congress, he wrote to one of them the following letter:—

* Autobiography; Jefferson's Works, vol. i. p. 11.

'Philadelphia, July 5, 1775.

'Mr. Strahan,

'You are a member of Parliament, and one of that majority which has doomed my country to destruction. You have begun to burn our towns and murder our people. Look upon your hands — they are stained with the blood of your relations! You and I were long friends; you are now my enemy, and I am

'Yours.

'B. FRANKLIN.'*

Wishing, also, to define clearly to congress the line he proposed to take by one of those resolute acts, which, proceeding from a man of his wisdom and importance, are much more impressive than any speeches, he laid before it a detailed plan of a confederation between the colonies.† This, in fact, was proposing inpendence without mentioning the word. His scheme was not taken into consideration, and in all probability its only object was to set men thinking in that direction. The actual temper of congress did not yet permit it to grapple openly with such formidable questions.

Indignant at these hesitations and delays, stung to the quick by Dickenson's insolent moderation, John Adams was no longer master of himself. He wrote thus to General Warren :—

'I am determined to write freely to you this time. A certain great fortune and fiddling genius, whose fame has been trumpeted so loudly, has given a silly cast to our whole doings. We are between hawk and buzzard. We ought to have had in our hands, a month ago, the whole legislative, executive, and judicial of the whole continent, and have completely modelled a constitution; and to have raised a naval

* Franklin's Works, vol. viii. p. 155.

† July 21, 1775.



power, and opened all our ports wide; to have arrested every friend of government on the continent, and held them as hostages for the poor victims in Boston; and then opened the door as wide as possible for peace and reconciliation. After this, they might have petitioned, negotiated, addressed, &c., if they would. Is all this extravagant? Is it wild? Is it not the soundest policy?"*

The letter was intercepted by the English. Published forthwith at Boston by the royal governor's order as a proof of the evil intentions of the popular party, it was received with exulting indignation by the out and out royalists, and with surprise and alarm by the still undecided patriots. In congress itself, the ill humour against John Adams was extreme. He was left in a kind of solitude in Philadelphia; he was avoided in the streets as one whose acquaintance was certainly compromising, perhaps in some sort criminal. Dickenson no longer bowed to him.† But the first effect having passed away, the result, on the whole, was more useful than mischievous. The question of independence was set up before the nation; people became accustomed by degrees to look boldly in the face certain contingencies of the future, on which, till then, they had scarcely dared to permit themselves to think. Every word, however, publicly uttered in favour of independence was still regarded with distrust; every accusation of a tendency to a separation was repudiated as calumnious by the *sons of liberty* of the middle provinces and the south. At New York, a committee of safety declared a man, who had been proved guilty of spreading a report that congress had proclaimed independence, an enemy of his country.‡ In South Carolina, the provincial

* Works of John Adams, vol. ii. p. 411; Letter to James Warren.

† Ibid. p. 423; Diary, Sept. 15, 1775.

‡ American Archives, vol. iii. p. 21; August 4, 1775.

congress, after examining Franklin's plan of confederation, declared it to be unseasonable, and instructed its delegates to congress not to consent, until further orders, to any plan of confederation.* In Virginia, a citizen of the county of Hanover, who had ventured to say that the country was aiming at independence, was compelled to make an apology.† In Pennsylvania, the committee of the county of Chester, accused by certain 'enemies of liberty' of desiring independence, declared that 'it held in horror so pernicious an idea;'‡ the country was decided on loyalty, awaiting the result of the petition to the King.

* American Archives, iii. p. 196; September 4, 1775.

† Ibid. iii. p. 644; September 15, 1775. The document is worth citing:—

'*Hanover County* (*Virginia*) *Committee.*

'At a meeting of the Committee for *Hanover* county, *Sept.* 5th, 1775.

'Whereas I, the subscriber, have been charged with saying many things injurious to the *American* cause, and in particular with declaring that this country was in a state of rebellion, and aimed at a state of independence, more than opposition to Parliamentary taxation; and whereas due proof is made thereof, before the Committee of this county: now, in order to atone, to the utmost of my power, for the injury that may possibly have been done by me, I do hereby declare that I am heartily sorry for such my offence; and I do hereby promise, in future, to conduct myself so as to give no just cause of complaint to my countrymen, but to contribute my utmost to the success of the measures adopted for the defence of *American* liberty.

'THOMAS ANDERSON.'

'The said *Thomas Anderson*, having signed the above concession, is acquitted from further prosecution; and it is ordered that the Clerk do forthwith transmit the same to the Printer, to be published in the *Gazette*.

'BARTLETT ANDERSON, *Clerk*.'

‡ Ibid. iii. p. 774; September 25, 1775.



Nothing, however, seemed to indicate a favourable change in the disposition of the British Government. The first military successes of the Americans had no other effect upon George III. than to make him keener for the quarrel. On being informed of the battle of Bunker's Hill, all that he thought of was to increase his armaments, and entering into negotiations for the hiring of foreign soldiers. It was on hearing of these preparations for a war of extermination that Washington definitely cast away all idea of an accommodation;* his impression, shared by General Greene,† the most popular of the general officers under his command, spread throughout the army, then from one to another, until it crept in amongst the public; John Adams ceased to be avoided at Philadelphia as a leper; a letter appeared in that city addressed to the people of Pennsylvania,‡ in which the author, after inciting his fellow citizens to look boldly at the bugbears which the English party was constantly holding up before them in order to discourage them from independence, proceeded gravely to examine if there were any reason to

* October 1, 1775. A letter from Washington himself, written a few months afterwards, to Joseph Reed, proves it: 'I have never entertained an idea of an accommodation since I heard of the measures which were adopted in consequence of the Bunker's Hill fight.'—Washington's *Writings*, vol. iii. p. 286; Letter to J. Reed, February 10, 1776.

† 'I hinted in my last that people began heartily to wish a declaration of independence. . . . We should open our ports to all who have a mind to come and trade with us. . . The French will never agree to furnish us with powder, as long as there is the least probability of an accommodation between us and Great Britain. The alternative is a separation from Great Britain, or subjugation to her.'— *General Greene to Governor Ward.* Prospect Hill, October 23, 1775; American Archives, vol. iii. p. 1,146.

‡ October 11, 1775.

apprehend that America, separated from Great Britain, must become the prey of other nations; if it were true that without King, Lords, and Commons, it would be impossible for her to exist either free or tranquil; finally, if it were probable that the Presbyterians of Massachusetts and the Anglicans of Virginia, had formed a coalition to exterminate Quakers and Anabaptists.*

Congress, however, still continued in a state of complete apathy, when it was at length † announced that, as his only answer to the petition of his American subjects, the King had treated them as rebels in a proclamation of August 23, 1775. The public indignation now burst forth, and this time reacted upon congress, which had been hesitating for a fortnight to authorise New Hampshire, the governor of which had taken flight four months before, to construct a government for itself. On November 3, 1775, it determined on this great step in the path of independence, and the next day, South Carolina received, in its turn, permission to take measures for finding a substitute for the government of the crown.‡ Dickenson felt that his influence was passing away, and in order to prevent congress from proceeding too rapidly in a course which seemed full of peril, he made use of the ascendency which he still had over the legislature of Pennsylvania, to prevail upon it to issue instructions for the guidance of its delegates in congress, in virtue of which they were bound to reject every proposition tending to a separation;§ a party move that was skillful enough, and which certainly delayed the declaration of independence

* American Archives, vol. iii. pp. 1,013–1,015.

† November 1, 1775.

‡ John Adams's Works, vol. iii. pp. 18-22; *Autobiography.*

§ November 9, 1775; American Archives, vol. iii. p. 1,408.



for several months, but which did not seriously obstruct the progress of opinion. The legislature of New Jersey imitated that of Pennsylvania; but, in the middle provinces themselves, the instructions framed by Dickenson became the subject of keen discussion in the newspapers.* The attack was sharper than the defence. The tide was evidently turning; the current ceased to run against John Adams and his friends. A decisive act of the congress soon furnished proof of it. For three months the party of action had been trying ineffectually to induce that body to enter into negotiations with foreign powers. On November 29, 1775, it resolved to appoint a secret committee, 'charged to correspond with friends in England, Ireland, and other parts of the world;' and Dickenson himself consented to be one of this little council, the real object of which, so ill disguised under a timorous title, was to look out for allies from amid the enemies of Great Britain.†

M. de Vergennes had not waited for this vote of the congress to determine upon acquainting the Americans with the sympathies of France. He was one of those who for a long time had foreseen the revolt of the English colonies, and the use which France might make of it against Great Britain; but he had also a glimpse of the dangers of revolutionary infection,‡ and he had no fancy

* American Archives, vol. iii. pp. 1,408, 1,413.

† This committee was composed of five members — Harrison, Franklin, Johnson, Dickenson, and Jay.

‡ 'The principles of moderation and justice which so constantly animate the councils of the King, and direct all their resolutions, should be a reason for his Britannic Majesty being proof against the anxiety which some violent persons, enemies of public tranquility, would excite in him respecting our views. Far from desiring to avail ourselves of the embarrassment in which England now is as respects American affairs, we should rather desire to have the means

for hazarding anything on the strength of remote and uncertain contingencies.* In like manner, even after the battle of Lexington, he would have remained an unmoved observer of events, waiting to be guided by them, if, like the greater part of the French diplomatists of his time, his mind had not been haunted by the recollection of the surprise of which France had been the victim in 1755.† He thought for a moment that he had very serious grounds for apprehending that England was meditating some project for putting an end to the quarrel with her colonies by making a rush against France, and by diverting against our own islands the military ardour of the Americans, whose violent and suspicious humour it seemed easy at all times to inflame

of aiding her to extricate herself. The spirit of revolt, wherever it may burst out, is always a dangerous example: it is with moral as with physical maladies — both one and the other may become infectious. This consideration alone must induce us to take care that the spirit of independence which has so terribly exploded in North America should not communicate itself to those points in which we are interested in that quarter of the globe.' — *The Count de Vergennes to the Count de Guines*, the French Ambassador in London, June 23, 1775.

* 'Let us not anticipate events, but content ourselves with learning them when they happen.' — *The Count de Vergennes to M. Garnier*, Chargé d'Affaires in London, May 12, 1775. 'As a calm observer, I prefer to follow the course of events than to endeavour to predict them.' — *The Count de Vergennes to the Count Guines*, July 9, 1775.

† 'The surprise upon us in 1755 is one of those events of which our horror preserves the remembrance, even when resentment has passed away. It is to protect ourselves against a similar perfidy I have strongly urged you, sir, to endeavour to find friends in the Opposition party. This party has such an interest in penetrating into the plans of the Court, and to thwart them, that it is from it, beyond all question, that it must be possible to derive the best information.' — *Vergennes to Guines*, July 10, 1775. See Appendix iii.



on the subject of our supposed design upon Canada.* In order to prevent this danger, M. de Vergennes authorized his ambassador in London, the Count de Guines, to send an emissary to America, commissioned to ascertain the feeling of the colonies, and to make them understand that France had given up all projects against Canada, that she admired their conduct, and was disposed to show her esteem for them by arrangements favourable to their commerce.† A few days before the arrival at Philadelphia of this French agent, one M. de Bonvouloir, the diplomatic committee of congress had charged Mr. Dumas at The Hague,‡ and Mr. Arthur Lee in London,§ secretly to sound the disposition of foreign powers with respect to America. M. de Bonvouloir was accordingly a god-send to the committee, though, in conformity with his instructions,‖ he only gave himself out for '*a well disposed private individual*,' without authority or mission, but having at Paris '*some useful acquaintances*,' through whom he '*thought*' he knew that France wished well to America, that she might, '*perhaps*,' shut her eyes to purchases of warlike stores, which might be discreetly made in her ports, and that, '*perhaps*,' she might listen to any requests made in a way not to compromise her. He

* *Guines to Vergennes*, July 28, 1775. *Vergennes to Guines*, August 7, 1775.

† *Vergennes to Guines*, August 7, 1775.

‡ Franklin's Works, vol. viii. p. 164; Letter to Charles Dumas, December 9, 1775.

§ American Diplomatic Correspondence, vol. ii. p. 5; Committee of Secret Correspondence to A. Lee. See also a letter from Franklin to Don Gabriel de Bourbon, December 12, 1775. — Franklin's Works, vol. viii. p. 168.

‖ *The Count de Guines to the Count de Vergennes*, September 8, 1775.

undertook to communicate to his *acquaintances* the result of his interviews with the members of the committee. They had need of two engineer officers; he would present their request. They desired to procure in France arms and powder; he would refer their agents to *good correspondents* in the French ports. They enquired if it would be prudent on their part to send a plenipotentiary to Paris, and if 'France would be satisfied with having an exclusive commerce with them during a limited time, as an indemnity for the expense she would be put to in supporting their cause;' he did not object to put the questions.*

Such were the first overtures which France and America made to each other almost simultaneously. The committee of secret correspondence was not less interested than M. de Vergennes in the negotiations being conducted with the greatest discretion. Any public appeal to a foreign power, would, at this juncture, have revolted the moral feeling of a considerable portion of the country.

'In this country,' wrote M. de Bonvouloir to the Count de Guines, 'there are still a good many people who cling to the King, who it seems has not yet done them harm enough. They would see with apprehension a foreign nation meddling in their affairs. The sound heads who compose the Secret Council are anxious to gain people over to them, and make them aware of the necessity there is for their being assisted. In this I am of opinion they are acting discreetly. They are waiting to have their cities destroyed and their houses burnt, which will raise to its climax their horror of the Leopards.'†

The year 1776 opened with the bombardment of Norfolk, and the publication of Paine's pamphlet entitled

* *M. de Bonvouloir to the Count de Guines*, December 28, 1775.
† Ibid.



'Common Sense.'* All the sophisms of the radicals of all ages against aristocratic and monarchical institutions, all the reasons, which for three months had been appealed to in favour of separation, were summed up in this little work (published at the suggestion of Franklin), written in a clever spirited style, likely to tell upon the mob. In a few days the hatred against England, and the idea of independence, made remarkable progress among the masses. 'A few more such flaming arguments, as were exhibited at Falmouth and Norfolk, added to the sound doctrine and unanswerable reasoning contained in the pamphlet "Common Sense," wrote Washington, on Jan. 31, 'will not leave numbers at a loss to decide upon the propriety of a separation.'†

The same temporizing and make-shift spirit continued, however, to paralyse the majority of congress, to the great detriment of the army, which was deficient in ammunition, clothing, shoes, men, and to the peril of the country, which continued in a state of anarchy. When, after two months' leave of absence spent in his native colony, John Adams resumed his seat in congress, on February 9, 1776, he found it not less restive against his advice than it was when he left it. A few days after his arrival, the delegates from Maryland had received an express prohibition against any demonstration in favour of independence,‡ and Franklin had in vain made new attempts to obtain the attention of congress to his plan of a confederation.§ In spite of its success out of doors, the party of reaction was wearied out and discouraged in the assembly. In spite of the unpardon-

* January 8, 1766.

† Washington's *Writings*, vol. iii. p. 276; Letter to Joseph Reed.

‡ January 11, 1776. § January 16, 1776.

able bitterness of the King's speech on opening Parliament on October 26, 1775; in spite of the Act of Parliament,* which, regarding the Americans as enemies, declared their vessels to be lawful prizes, the peace party was obstinately bent on waiting for the propositions of the commissioners, authorised by the same Act, to accept the submission of repentant colonies, and to pardon contrite rebels. John Adams again took the field with generous ardour. The evacuation of Boston by the English† came just in time to restore courage to his friends, and weight to his burning harangues; day by day the vehement athlete gained ground, but only step by step, and after violent discussion. Privateering against the English was authorised;‡ the British Custom Houses were suppressed; the ports of America were thrown open to all nations; its commerce was declared free, and the last vestiges of the old colonial system, the last marks of colonial dependence, were effaced.§

Though committed to acts which implied the rupture of all ties between America and Great Britain, the majority in congress did not the less shrink from a formal declaration of the consummated fact. The word separation carried with it a sort of superstitious terror, which John Adams ridiculed with the bitterest sarcasm in a letter to General Gates a few days before he succeeded in forcing his colleagues to take the decisive step:

'We have hitherto conducted half a war, acted upon the line of defence, &c. &c.; but you will see by to-morrow's paper that, for the future, we are likely to wage three-quarters of a war. The continental ships of war, and provincial

* December 16, 1775.
† March 17, 1776.
‡ March 23, 1776.
§ April 6, 1776.



ships of war, and letters of marque, and privateers, are permitted to cruise on British property, wherever found on the ocean. This is not independency, you know — nothing like it. If a post or two more should bring you unlimited latitude of trade to all nations, and a polite invitation to all nations to trade with you, take care that you do not call it or think it independency. No such matter! Independency is a hobgoblin of such frightful mien, that it would throw a delicate person into fits to look it in the face.'*

The negotiations with the enemies of the mother country continued to be pursued, however, with a traitorous activity. On March 3, 1776, the committee of secret correspondence had taken upon itself to send Mr. Silas Deane to Paris, in order to make direct offers of friendship to France, and solicitations for assistance, which till then it had not ventured to transmit to M. de Vergennes, except through indirect channels. Already communicated to the French government, from Philadelphia by Bonvouloir,† from London by Lee and Beaumarchais, ‡ from the Hague by Dumas, § the request of the American "insurgents" became the subject of serious consideration in the councils of Louis XVI. just when Mr. Silas Deane was leaving America.

M. de Rayneval, first clerk in the office of Foreign Affairs, made an abstract of these documents, and supported their views with much force, in a paper drawn up for the prime minister. France, according to him, had much to gain by the dismemberment of the British Empire, and nothing to apprehend, as regarded her

* Adams's Works, vol. i. p. 206.

† *Bonvouloir to the Count de Guines*, December 28, 1775. It reached Paris only on February 27, 1776.

‡ February 29, 1776. Beaumarchais et son temps, par M. de Loménie, vol. ii. p. 99.

§ American Diplomatic Correspondence, vol. viii. p. 260; *Dumas to Franklin*, April 30, 1776.

own colonies. It was her policy, therefore, to favour the cause of the insurgents, first by secret succours and encouragements of a nature to stimulate their perseverance, and then, when the strength of England should begin to flag, by a vigorous intervention. It was not possible for her to assume the continuation of peace as the point of departure for her policy; the most passive bearing would not save her from the suspicions and sudden attacks of Great Britain; prudence required, therefore, that she should prepare the means of successfully conducting the war. The most important of these means was to make sure of the colonies, and, if need were, to make common cause with them.*

M. de Vergennes was not by any means so positive on all these points; and in his communications with the King, he affected to show himself less decided than he was. He certainly made no secret of the satisfaction he felt at the idea of a civil war which would exhaust the resources of Great Britain, but he asked himself, with some perplexity of mind, which is it really the interest of France and Spain to wish for,—the subjection, or the independence of America? In either contingency he considered the colony of the two crowns as menaced by the invasions of the English race. Always disposed to expect from our neighbours aggressions the most incompatible with international good faith, it was his intimate conviction that it was the right and interest of France to profit by their intestine quarrels in order to pour down upon them and strike a decisive blow; but, knowing the scrupulous irresolution of the King, and his love of peace, he did not dare

* These recommendations are in a paper entitled 'Reflections on the actual position of the English Colonies, and the policy which France ought to pursue respecting them.'—See Appendix iii.



urge him to the adoption of so vigorous and offensive a policy, but confined himself to recommending what he called 'a circumspect, but active, preparation.' To labour for the preservation of peace without believing in it; to arm without exciting suspicion; to encourage the *insurgents* by secret favours and vague promises, without any formal understanding with them; to foment a civil war in an underhand way and dexterously to blind the eyes of the English ministry, without compromising either dignity or equity—such was the tortuous and shuffling policy which M. de Vergennes proposed to the council, out of consideration for the King's doubts and conscience.

M. Turgot opposed to this petty policy considerations profound, decorous, and wise in the most marked degree. Neither the subjection of America nor its independence must necessarily involve, according to him, the conquest of the French colonies. Temporarily subjected, America would continue to be a cause of embarrassment and ruin to England, that would paralyse her external action; emancipated, she could only become dangerous to those powers which, obstinately resisting the natural course of things, should refuse their colonies the commercial and political liberty which was their right, and which should persist in regarding them as conquered provinces, instead of treating them as friendly states, protected but not dependent. A prompt accommodation between America and England, which would place at the disposal of the latter the forces levied to overawe the '*insurgents*,' and which would compel the English ministry to engage in some brilliant enterprise in order to occupy the minds of the people, was the only contingency which, if realised, could expose the two Crowns to any immediate danger. But then

this was a danger too purely supposititious to authorize, on the part of France, an offensive war, which would be as disastrous to the finances of the kingdom as contrary to the moral principles of the King, and incompatible with the reforms necessary to the State, and the comfort and well-being of the people. Prudence no doubt required that France should be prepared against a surprise. She ought to fill her arsenals, strengthen her fleet, drill her soldiers, and watch the movements of her neighbours. She might usefully keep up a correspondence with the American colonies, provided she had no ostensible agent there openly acting in her name. She might give the Americans full liberty to make purchases in her ports, and to procure through commercial channels the military stores, and even the money they might require. Her position should be that of neutrality. To refuse to sell to the Americans would be a breach of it. But it would be equally a breach of it to supply them with secret aid in money, and this step, difficult to conceal, would give rise to just complaints on the part of the English.* After long deliberation, the counsels of M. de Vergennes triumphed over those of M. Turgot. France and Spain determined to supply the colonies by means of paid agents, whose mission, never avowed to the Americans, would be left to them to divine. No direct assistance was therefore granted to the '*insurgents*,' and this it was that in all probability enabled M. de Vergennes to reply with official indignation to the English negotiator, who, in Dr. Franklin's presence, accused us of having provoked the war by encouraging the colonists to revolt: 'The Count de Vergennes grew a little warm, and declared

* Œuvres de M. Turgot, vol. viii. pp. 435-504 (edition of 1809).



firmly that the breach was made, and our independence declared, long before we received the least encouragement from France; and he defied the world to give the smallest proof of the contrary. "There sits," said he, "Mr. Franklin, who knows the fact, and can contradict me if I do not speak the truth."' *

The fact which M. de Vergennes suppressed was that, on June 10, 1776, three weeks before the declaration of independence, he had remitted a million of francs to Beaumarchais, to purchase supplies for the Americans through the commercial house of Rodrigue, Hortalez, and Co.† On that very day the opportuneness of proclaiming the emancipation of the colonies was hotly contested in congress. The progress of opinion had, however, been much quickened since the great triumph of John Adams in the month of April. Independence no longer appeared so frightful a spectre. The provincial congress of North Carolina had authorized its delegates to the continental congress to vote for separation.‡ The chief justice of South Carolina had declared, in his charge to the grand jury, that the people were absolved from their allegiance to George III.§ The same thing had been done by the assembly of Rhode Island.‖ The convention of Virginia had formally directed its representative at Philadelphia to propose an act of emancipation.¶ Pennsylvania itself, superseding its previous instructions to its delegates on November 19, 1775, had since authorized them to vote for a confederation and to make treaties with foreign powers, leaving the decision on all other points to

* Franklin's Works, vol. ix. p. 274.

† Beaumarchais et son temps, par M. de Loménie, vol. ii. p. 111.

‡ April 12, 1776. § April 23, 1776. ‖ May 4, 1776.

¶ May 15, 1776.

their ability, prudence, and integrity.* The continental congress had recommended all the colonies which had not yet organised a government, to frame for themselves a constitution; † and Dickenson himself had patiently listened to R. H. Lee, when, in the name of Virginia, he proposed the resolution that 'these united colonies are, and have a right to be, free and independent States.' ‡

For two days the question was warmly debated. § The persevering champion of prudence attacked not the motion itself, but its unseasonableness. He acknowledged that a reconciliation with Great Britain had become impossible, and that the people were beginning to be sensible of it even in the middle provinces; but this feeling, he added, must yet be left to ripen. Neither New York, nor New Jersey, nor Delaware had as yet assented to the propriety of a separation. Was it desired to compel their delegates to quit congress? Was it desired to run the risk of seeing these colonies separate themselves from the union? Why not wait? In a few months the intentions of France and Spain would be more accurately known, and there would meanwhile be time to lay the groundwork of a confederation. The creation of a new state should precede the proclamation of its existence. Congress might lose everything, and could gain nothing, by a precipitate course.

Wilson, Robert R. Livingston, E. Rutledge supported Dickenson. J. Adams, R. H. Lee, and Wythe, defended the motion like men who felt themselves masters of the position; and the majority of congress went with them. Out of consideration for the scruples of the

* June 8, 1776. † May 10, 1776. ‡ June 7, 1776.

§ Jefferson's Works, vol. i. pp. 12-18; *Autobiography*, 8th and 16th of June, 1776.



middle provinces, it was resolved not to take the definitive vote until the first of July; but in order to shorten as much as possible the delay caused by this adjournment, a committee, composed of T. Jefferson, John Adams, Dr. Franklin, Roger Sherman, and Robert R. Livingston, was appointed, with instructions immediately to frame a declaration of independence; other committees were also chosen to propose a plan of confederation between the colonies, and ascertain the basis on which the new Union could treat with foreign powers.

The joy of John Adams burst out with that mixture of the burlesque and the profound which is peculiar to men of his race: 'Be silent,' he wrote to Francis Dana, in order to make him understand what it was that moved him without violating the rules of congress, 'and patient, and time will bring forth, after the usual groans, throes, and pains upon such occasions, a fine child — a fine vigorous, healthy boy, I presume; God bless him, and make him a great, wise, virtuous, pious, rich, and powerful man!'*

* Adams's Works, vol. ix. p. 210; Letter to Francis Dana, June 12, 1776.

CHAPTER IV.

1776.

WHY JEFFERSON WAS COMMISSIONED TO DRAW UP THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, AND HOW HIS PERFORMANCE WAS RECEIVED BY CONGRESS — JOHN ADAMS'S ACCOUNT — JEFFERSON'S ACCOUNT — FRANKLIN'S STORY OF JOHN THOMPSON, THE HATTER, AND HIS NEW SIGN — SIGNING OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.

JEFFERSON was thirty-three years of age when he was commissioned to draw up the declaration of independence. John Adams had reached eighty-six, when he was explaining, not without some peevishness, how so young a man could have been entrusted with such a task:—

'Cushing, Samuel Adams, Paine, and myself, all destitute of fortune — four poor pilgrims — proceeded in one coach, and were escorted through Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey, into Pennsylvania. We were met at Frankfort by Dr. Rush, Mr. Mifflin, Mr. Bayard, and several other of the most active sons of liberty in Philadelphia, who desired a conference with us. We invited them to take tea with us in a private apartment. They asked leave to give us some information and advice, which we thankfully granted. They represented to us that the friends of government in Boston and in the Eastern States, in their correspondence with their friends in Pennsylvania and all the Southern States, had represented us as four desperate adventurers. . . . We were all suspected of having independence in view. "Now," said they, "you must not utter the word independence, nor give the least hint or insinuation of the idea,



either in congress or any private conversation. If you do, you are undone; for the idea of independence is as unpopular in Pennsylvania, and in all the Middle and Southern States, as the Stamp Act. No man dares to speak of it. Moreover, you are the representatives of the suffering state. Boston and Massachusetts are under a rod of iron. . . . Your feelings have been hurt, your passions excited; you are thought to be too warm, too zealous, too sanguine. You must be, therefore, very cautious. You must not come forward with any bold measures; you must not pretend to take the lead. You know Virginia is the most populous state in the Union. They are very proud of their ancient dominion, as they call it. They think they have a right to take the lead; and the Southern States, and Middle States, too, are too much disposed to yield it to them." . . . This conversation, and the principles, facts, and motives suggested in it, have given a colour, complexion, and character to the whole policy of the United States from that day to this. Without it, Mr. Washington would never have commanded our armies, nor Mr. Jefferson have been the author of the Declaration of Independence.'

'Mr. Jefferson came into congress in June 1775, and brought with him a reputation for literature, science, and a happy talent of composition. Writings of his were handed about, remarkable for the peculiar felicity of expression. Though a silent member in congress, he was so prompt, frank, explicit, and decisive upon committees and in conversation (not even Samuel Adams was more so), that he soon seized upon my heart; and upon this occasion I gave him my vote, and did all in my power to procure the votes of others. I think he had one more vote than any other, and that placed him at the head of the committee. I had the next highest number, and that placed me the second. The committee met, discussed the subject, and then appointed Mr. Jefferson and me to make the draft; I suppose because we were the two first on the list.

'The sub-committee met. Jefferson proposed to me to make the draft. I said, "I will not." "You should do it." "Oh! no." "Why will you not? You ought to do it." "I

will not." "Why?" "Reasons enough." "What can be your reasons?" "Reason first: You are a Virginian, and a Virginian ought to appear at the head of this business. Reason second: I am obnoxious, suspected, and unpopular; you are very much otherwise. Reason third: You can write ten times better than I can." "Well," said Jefferson, "if you are decided, I will do as well as I can." "Very well. When you have drawn it up, we will have a meeting."

'A meeting we accordingly had, and conned the paper over. I was delighted with its high tone and the flights of oratory with which it abounded; especially that concerning negro slavery, which, though I knew his Southern brethren would never suffer to pass in congress,* I certainly never would oppose. There were other expressions which I would not have inserted, if I had drawn it up — particularly that which called the King tyrant. I thought this too personal. . . . I thought the expression too passionate, and too much like scolding, for so grave and solemn a document; but as Franklin and Sherman were to inspect it afterwards, I thought it would not become me to strike it out. I

* Jefferson takes care in his memoirs to call attention to the fact that — 'Our Northern brethren also, I believe, felt a little tender under those censures; for, though their people had very few slaves themselves, yet they had pretty considerable carriers of them to others.' — Jefferson's Works, vol. i. p. 19; *Autobiography*. This remark, combined with that of John Adams's, is the best comment on the violent diatribe which congress had the good sense and the good taste to suppress. Slave-dealers and slave-masters had scarcely the right to put down the protection of the slave trade among the political crimes of George III., which warranted the declaration of independence, or to express themselves as follows: 'He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him (the Africans). . . . This piratical warfare, the opprobium of Infidel powers, is the warfare of the Christian King of Great Britain. . . . He has prostituted his negative for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or to restrain this execrable commerce. . . . And he is now exciting those very people to rise in arms among us,' &c.— *Autobiography*; vol. i. p. 23.



consented to report it, and do not now remember that I made or suggested a single alteration.

'We reported it to the committee of five. It was read, and I do not remember that Franklin or Sherman criticised anything. We were all in haste. Congress was impatient, and the instrument was reported, as I believe, in Jefferson's handwriting, as he first drew it. Congress cut off about a quarter of it, as I expected they would; but they obliterated some of the best of it, and left all that was exceptional, if anything in it was. I have long wondered that the original draft has not been published. I suppose the reason is, the vehement philippic against negro slavery.

'As you justly observe, there is not an idea in it but what has been hackneyed in Congress for two years before.'*

Quoted by Timothy Pickering in a historical notice written in 1823, on the occasion of the anniversary of the declaration of independence, and then circulated through the newspapers, the account of John Adams reached Jefferson. It had for him all the piquancy and attractiveness of novelty. The scenes in which he was made to be present, and the language which was put into his mouth; these were in his eyes positive discoveries. He was quite aware that he was the author of the declaration of independence, but not that he was the puny protégé of John Adams. He thought it very natural that he should be made acquainted with what might have passed at Frankfort between the sons of liberty in Boston, and those in Philadelphia, but not that he should receive revelations touching what he himself had done in congress. He wrote to Madison in order to set the matter in its true light, and we have thus two opposite accounts of one of the greatest events in modern history, written by two men who took the most important part in it; they had seen with

* Adams's Works, vol. ii. pp. 512-514.

different eyes; which of them had seen what really was? This is a question which it would be impertinent to attempt to clear up at this time of day. History then is reduced to solely and simply enregistering the two depositions.

'Mr. Adams's memory has led him into unquestionable error,' said Jefferson. 'At the age of eighty-eight, and forty-seven years after the transactions of independence, this is not wonderful. Nor should I, at the age of eighty, on the small advantage of that difference only, venture to oppose my memory to his, were it not supported by written notes, taken by myself at the moment, and on the spot. He says the committee of five — to wit, Dr. Franklin, Sherman, Livingston, and ourselves — met, discussed the subject, and then appointed him and myself to make the draft; that we, as a sub-committee, met, and conned the paper over, and he does not remember that he made or suggested a single alteration. Now, these details are quite incorrect. The committee of five met (no such thing as a sub-committee was proposed); but they unanimously pressed on myself alone to undertake the draft. I consented: I drew it; but before I reported it to the committee, I communicated it *separately* to Dr. Franklin and Mr. Adams, requesting their corrections, because they were the two members of whose judgements and amendments I wished most to have the benefit, before presenting it to the committee; and you have seen the original paper now in my hands, with the corrections of Dr. Franklin and Mr. Adams interlined in their own handwritings. Their alterations were two or three only, and merely verbal. I then wrote a fair copy, reported it to the committee, and from them, unaltered, to congress. This personal communication and consultation with Mr. Adams, he has mis-remembered into the actings of a sub-committee. . . . Whether, also, the sentiments of independence, and the reason for declaring it, which make so great a portion of the instrument, had been hackneyed in congress for two years before the 4th of July '76, or this dictum also of Mr. Adams be another slip of memory, let history say. This, however, I will say for Mr.



Adams, that he supported the declaration with zeal and ability, fighting fearlessly for every word of it. As to myself, I thought it a duty to be, on that occasion, a passive auditor of the opinions of others, more impartial judges than I could be of its merits or demerits. During the debate, I was sitting by Doctor Franklin, and he observed that I was writhing a little under the acrimonious criticisms on some of its parts; and it was on that occasion that, by way of comfort, he told me the story of John Thompson, the hatter, and his new sign.* "I have made it a rule," said he, "whenever in my power, to avoid becoming the draftsman of papers to be reviewed by a public body. I took my lesson from an incident which I will relate to you. When I was a journeyman printer, one of my companions, an apprentice hatter, having served out his time, was about to open a shop for himself. His first concern was to have a handsome sign-board, with a proper inscription. He composed it in these words: 'John Thompson, *Hatter*, *makes* and *sells hats*, for ready money,' with the figure of a hat subjoined; but he thought he would submit it to his friends for their amendments. The first he showed it to thought the word '*Hatter*' tautologous, because followed by the words 'makes hats,' which showed he was a hatter. It was struck out. The next observed that the word '*makes*' might as well be omitted, because his customers would not care who made the hats. If good and to their mind, they would buy, by whomsoever made. He struck it out. A third said he thought the words '*for ready money*' were useless, as it was not the custom of the place to sell on credit. Every one who purchased expected to pay. They were parted with, and the inscription now stood: 'John Thompson sells hats.' '*Sells hats!*' says his next friend. 'Why, nobody would expect you to give them away: what then is the use of that word?' It was stricken out, and 'hats' followed it, the rather that there was one painted on the board. So the inscription was reduced ultimately to 'John Thompson,' with the figure of a hat subjoined."†

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* Jefferson's Works, vol. vii. pp. 304, 306; Letter to Madison.

† Ibid. vol. viii. p. 500; *Anecdotes of Dr. Franklin.*

It took congress not less than three sittings to reduce the draft to its ultimate form. The resolution in favour of independence was passed on July 2, 1776;* the declaration drawn up by Jefferson was not adopted until the 4th,† the anniversary of which day is always celebrated as a national jubilee by the Americans. John Adams expected, not unreasonably, that this fête would have dated two days earlier; and the next day after that on which the separation between the two countries was definitively resolved on, and on which victory had at length crowned his impetuosity and tenacity, he wrote to his wife in a tone at once manly and striking:

'The second day of July 1776, will be the most memorable epoch in the history of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated, as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward for evermore.

'You will think me transported with enthusiasm, but I am not. I am well aware of the toil, and blood, and treasure, that it will cost us to maintain this declaration, and support and defend these states; yet, through all the gloom, I can see the rays of ravishing light and glory. I can see that the end is more than worth all the means, and that posterity will triumph in that day's transaction, even although we should rue it, which I trust in God we shall not.'‡

* This resolution, moved by R. H. Lee, was adopted by all the states represented in congress, except New York, the delegates of which had not received the necessary powers to vote, and were not authorized until eight days later by their constituents to accede to the decision of the twelve other states.

† It received the signatures of all present except Dickenson.

‡ Adams's Works, vol. ix. p. 420; Letter to Mrs. Adams, July 3, 1776.





CHAPTER V.

1776—1784.

JEFFERSON QUITS CONGRESS TO GO AND ABOLISH IN VIRGINIA ENTAILS, THE RIGHT OF PRIMOGENITURE, TITHES, &C. — HE IS LESS FORTUNATE IN HIS EFFORTS AGAINST SLAVERY — IS MADE GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA — DOES HIMSELF LITTLE HONOUR DURING THE INVASION OF THIS STATE IN 1781 — BECOMES DISGUSTED WITH PUBLIC LIFE — HIS WIFE'S DEATH — HE RETURNS TO CONGRESS — IS APPOINTED MINISTER TO PARIS.

THE declaration of independence once adopted, Jefferson soon discovered that there was nothing left for him to do in congress equal to what he had done. He could not remain there, consequently, without losing something of his importance; and he left it to devote himself to the most important work which a citizen unconnected with the profession of arms, or with diplomacy, could at that time accomplish—the reform of the civil legislation of Virginia, his native colony. For a year this reform had been impatiently waited for by the politicians of the northern part of the union. In the public feeling and social condition of the colonies now coalized against England, there were very striking diversities. In the south the soil belonged to great proprietors, surrounded by slaves and small cultivators. Entails and primogeniture perpetuated wealth and power in an aristocracy which monopolized almost all public functions; the Church of England

was the form of religion established by law, and both Society and the Church were constituted upon a hierarchical principle. In the north, on the contrary, a sentiment of equality was in general predominant, socially, and religiously.

'I dread the consequences of this dissimilitude of character,' wrote John Adams to Joseph Hawley, on November 25, 1775; 'and without the utmost caution on both sides, and the most considerate forbearance with one another, and prudent condescension on both sides, they will certainly be fatal. An alteration of the southern constitutions, which must certainly take place if this war continues, will gradually bring all the continent nearer and nearer to each other in all respects.'*

It was not only from the desire of rendering the United States more homogeneous, and of putting an end to every cause of division and separation, that John Adams wished for such an internal revolution in the south. Feelings much less pure were mixed up with this patriotic view, and when he learnt that Patrick Henry shared his opinions, and was disposed to realise them in Virginia, he experienced all the paltry pleasure that an envious man derives from the humiliation of the great:—

'The dons, the bashaws, the grandees, the patricians, the sachems, the nabobs — call them by what name you please — sigh and groan, and fret, and sometimes stamp, and foam, and curse, but all in vain. The decree is gone forth, and it cannot be recalled, that a more equal liberty than has prevailed in other parts of the earth must be established in America. That exuberance of pride which has produced an insolent domination in a few, a very few, opulent monopolizing families, will be brought down nearer to the confines of reason and moderation than they have been used to. This is all the evil which they themselves will endure. It will do

* J. Adams's Works, vol. ix. p. 367.



them good in this world, and in every other; for pride was not made for man, only as a tormenter.'*

Jefferson did not share in these spiteful sentiments; but a prouder feeling, and one still more revolutionary than that of Adams stimulated him, contempt for the past, and the ambition to remodel society according to his own views. By his mother's side he belonged to the Virginian aristocracy, and he meditated its destruction, not to give himself the satisfaction of a destroyer, not to put the laws of his state in accordance with those of other parts of the union, but to gratify himself as a logician, and to harmonize its constitution with his notions of a republican government: 'When I left congress in 1776, it was in the persuasion that our whole code must be reviewed, adapted to our republican form of government; and, now that we had no negatives of councils, governors, and kings to restrain us from doing right, that it should be corrected, in all its parts, with a single eye to reason.' †

By *reason*, Jefferson meant his own. A republican form of government may govern, and has, in fact, governed, societies essentially distinct. Jefferson's mind could not conceive a republic without a democracy, nor a democracy without the sovereign and uncontested power of the greatest number. All in Virginian society which could constrain and limit this power, all that did not directly emanate from it, all that could maintain a self-subsistent existence was sacrificed in

* J. Adams's Works, vol. ix. p. 287; Letter to Patrick Henry, June 3, 1776. It was the writer of this letter whom Jefferson and the Democratic party attempted, fifteen years afterwards, to represent as an aristocrat!

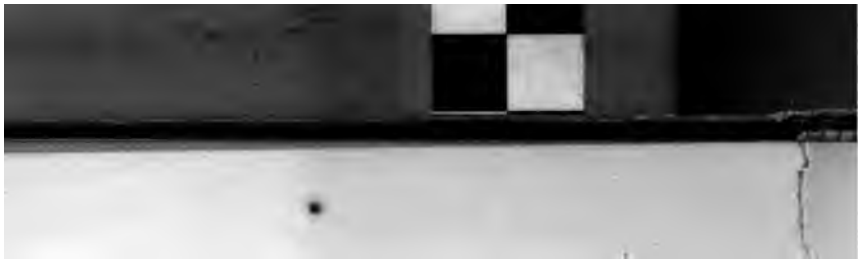
† Jefferson's Works, vol. i. p. 42; *Autobiography*.

his revolutionary scheme. He did not content himself with proposing to the assembly of Virginia the abolition of laws, already in point of fact become obsolete, which interfered with religious liberty; he required the absolute separation of Church and State, because a clergy paid by the State is not immediately dependent upon the masses. He wished to suppress primogeniture and entails, because great hereditary fortunes confer a power which the people recognise but which does not proceed from them: —

'In giving this account of the laws of which I was myself the mover and draftsman,' says Jefferson, 'I by no means mean to claim to myself the merit of obtaining their passage. I had many occasional and strenuous coadjutors in debate; and one most steadfast, able, and zealous, who was himself a host. . . . I considered four of these bills, passed or reported, as forming a system, by which every fibre would be eradicated, of ancient and future aristocracy, and a foundation laid for a government truly republican.'*

Had the great Virginian proprietors held a position apart from the bulk of the people as respected their fiscal or political privileges in the struggle against England, had they separated their cause from that of the country, had they rendered themselves odious to the people or dangerous to the advocates of national independence, I could comprehend Jefferson's anxiety to undermine their preponderance. But, in fact, not a person in the colony was exempt from taxation; every freeholder had a right to aspire to public office and political distinction; the only privilege of a Virginian gentleman was the influence which attaches to hereditary wealth and a long course of services rendered to the State, a natural one, which public opinion was not

* Jefferson's Works, vol. i. pp. 40-49; *Autobiography*.



at all jealous of, the overthrow of which it did not require, and which shed over the whole colony a lustre of which the cause of independence had the full benefit. It was the upper class which had constituted the greatness and power of Virginia; it was this class which had led the masses into the revolutionary movement, and supplied the army and congress with leaders. Jefferson had no right to regard it either as an enemy disarmed, or as a victim to be offered up to popular caprice. Without any political compulsion, he prematurely crushed that aristocracy which had been the guardian of public liberty against England, and which for many a day might yet have continued to be the guardian of public liberty against democracy.

Democracy requires to be restrained, otherwise it abandons itself to excesses which are its ruin. It is a piece of rare good fortune for it not to be entirely left to itself, and to find at its side an aristocratic element which, offering no opposition to its legitimate aspirations, dares to rebuke its impatience and excesses. Democracy is in itself intrinsically aggressive; it tends naturally to overthrow every barrier that opposes it. What Jefferson did for it, without any demand on its part, it would have been but too soon induced to do for itself; why did he anticipate its wishes? —

'It can never be too often repeated,' said he, 'that the time for fixing every essential right on a legal basis is while our rulers are honest, and ourselves united. From the conclusion of this war we shall be going downhill. It will not then be necessary to resort every moment to the people for support. They will be forgotten, therefore, and their rights disregarded. They will forget themselves, but in the sole faculty of making money, and will never think of uniting to effect a due respect for their rights. The shackles, there-

fore, which shall not be knocked off at the conclusion of this war, will remain on us long — will be made heavier and heavier, till our rights shall revive or expire in a convulsion.'*

A dreary prophecy, which becomes but too true when, diverting it from the fanciful objects he was thinking of, namely, the overthrow of the Anglican Church and the great landed property, we apply it to slavery.

These were the chains that should have been snapped before the ideas of right, justice, and liberty brought into action by the war of independence had lost their influence; before men's minds had slunk back into their materialist and selfish ruts, and before the evil had become too inveterate and too insupportable to be healed, but at the cost of social convulsions, in which the rights of humanity and the unity of America are both likely to succumb. Slavery — this was the only prerogative of the Virginian planters, the only obstacle to the improvement of the condition of the inferior class, the serious cause of division between the northern and southern states, the only germ of death which it was an urgent duty to have extirpated from the young American society.

To this public scourge, Jefferson had nothing to oppose but good intentions. This reckless reformer, this pitiless logician, who without hesitation had abruptly sacrificed the traditional organisation of his own state to false theories, handed over to the future the task of overthrowing a detestable institution, of which that future could only develope its vigour and its vice. All that he could venture to do against slavery in the assembly of Virginia was to propose a bill in 1778 prohibiting the importation of slaves. Cheap

* Jefferson's Works, vol. viii. p. 402; *Notes on Virginia.*



courage indeed! He has himself told us that, in point of fact, the importation of slaves had been suspended during the war, and that the bill for suspending it had passed without any opposition.* It was advantageous to everybody; a protectionist regulation as well as a humane measure. The Virginian proprietors already were, and have always continued to be, interested opponents of that trade. Rearing themselves an amount of slaves in excess of their wants, and often of their resources, they found themselves under the painful necessity of selling men, born and brought up under their care, to states which, like South Carolina and Georgia, still wanted hands, and to speculate on the ideas of justice then spread through the world, for the purpose of rendering this monstrous commerce more lucrative. To suppress the slave trade was to suppress the competition between the slavers and the breeders, and to give the latter the monopoly of a traffic which is very justly regarded as the most odious feature of American slavery. Nationally sanctioned, as far back as 1808, by an Act of congress under Jefferson's presidency, the prohibition of the slave trade has had the effect of more and more imparting the character of a chattel to the American slave, yet without preventing the number of slaves from increasing from 697,000 in 1790 to 3,200,000, according to the census of 1850.†

Jefferson foresaw this frightful increase. That which was required in order to check it, he has indicated in his memoirs, where he is describing the labours of the commission charged to revise the laws of Virginia: —

* Jefferson's Works, vol. i. p. 38; *Autobiography.*

† It is probable that the census of 1860 will show the actual number to be little under four millions.

'The bill on the subject of slaves was a mere digest of the existing laws respecting them, without any intimation of a plan for a future and general emancipation. It was thought better that this should be kept back, and attempted only by way of amendment, whenever the bill should be brought on. The principles of the amendment, however, were agreed on—that is to say, the freedom of all born after a certain day, and deportation at a proper age. But it was found that the public mind would not yet bear the proposition; nor will it bear it even at this day. Yet the day is not distant when it must bear and adopt it, or worse will follow. Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate than that these people are to be free: nor is it less certain that nature, habit, opinion, have drawn indelible lines of distinction between them. It is still in our power to direct the process of emancipation and deportation, peaceably, and in such slow degree as that the evil will wear off insensibly, and their place be, *pari passu*, filled up by free white labourers. If, on the contrary, it is left to force itself on, human nature must shudder at the prospect held up. We should in vain look for an example in the Spanish deportation, or deletion of the Moors. This precedent would fall far short of our case.'*

At the time when Jefferson was writing these words for posterity, what was his language to his contemporaries? It was now 1821. The United States were emerging with difficulty from a terrible crisis. A large territory, Missouri, had demanded admission to the Union. To obtain it should she or not be called upon to renounce slavery? This was the question which divided America into two hostile camps.

'Congress has no right to regulate,' wrote Jefferson to his correspondents, 'the condition of the different descriptions of men composing a state. This certainly is the exclusive right of every state, which nothing in the constitution has taken

* Jefferson's Works, vol. i. p. 48; *Autobiography*.



from them and given to the General Government.*. . . The real question, as seen in the states afflicted with this unfortunate population, is — Are our slaves to be presented with freedom or a dagger? For if congress has the power to regulate the conditions of the inhabitants of the states (within the states), it will be but another exercise of that power to declare that all shall be free.†. . . But as it is, we have the wolf by the ears, and we can neither hold him, nor safely let him go.‡ . . The boisterous sea of liberty, indeed, is never without a wave; and that from Missouri is now rolling towards us, but we shall ride over it, as we have over all others. It is not a moral question, but one merely of power.§ . . . The Missouri question is a mere party trick. The leaders of federalism, defeated in their schemes of obtaining power by rallying partisans to the principle of monarchism — a principle of personal, not of local division — have changed their tack, and throw out another barrel to the whale. They are taking advantage of the virtuous feelings of the people to effect a division of parties by a geographical line.'‖

Jefferson at this time no longer confined himself to representing the state legislatures as the only possible instruments through which emancipation could be effected; he expressed doubts about the possibility of emancipation itself; he accused congress of wishing to make itself the judge, and the federalists of devising dangerous novelties for their own party purposes. There was here a singular want of memory and good faith. At every period congress had acknowledged itself powerless to deal with the evil in the old states, but at every period it had endeavoured to circumscribe

* Jefferson's Works, vol. vii. p. 159; Letter to J. Holmes, April 22, 1820.

† Ibid. p. 200; Letter to J. Adams, January 22, 1821.

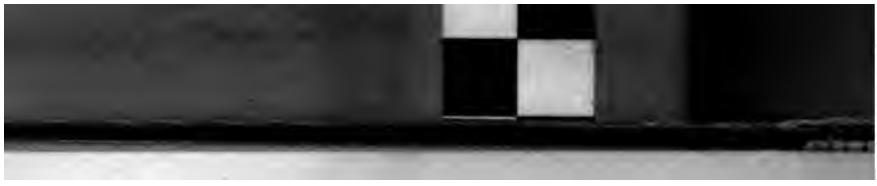
‡ Ibid. p. 159; Letter to J. Holmes, April 22, 1820.

§ Ibid. p. 194; Letter to Lafayette, December 26, 1820.

‖ Ibid. p. 180; Letter to Mr. Pinckney, September 30, 1820.

it within their limits, and the name of Jefferson is appended to the most radical measure that was ever proposed for this purpose. In 1784, when the passions of the country had not yet entered into this question, and when there was no great danger of frankly expressing his opinion, Jefferson had recommended that slavery should be excluded from all the states which might hereafter be constituted in the western territories belonging to the Union, and at the end of much and long deliberation congress consented to this suggestion after modifying it, and limiting the exclusion to the region which stretches to the north-west of the Ohio. The memoirs of Jefferson are as curious for what they omit as for what they contain. Not the slightest allusion is to be found there to this suggestion, of which he who proposed it might have been proud to claim the honour. The explanation is that in 1821 Jefferson was not at all desirous of such a distinction. The institution of slavery had borne its fruits in Virginia. 'This state is in a condition of unparalleled distress. The sudden reduction of the circulating medium from a plethory to all but annihilation is producing an entire revolution of fortune. In other places I have known lands sold by the sheriff for one year's rent; beyond the mountain we hear of good slaves selling for one hundred dollars, good horses for five dollars, and the sheriffs generally the purchasers.' * The only means of staving off complete ruin was to find new markets for the human produce which could no longer be fed, but was perishing on the spot; to diminish its intensity at home it had become necessary to spread the evil abroad.

* Jefferson's Works, vol vii. p. 152; Letter to H. Nelson, March 12, 1820.



'The attempt by one party to prohibit willing states from sharing the evil, is thought by the other to render desperate, by accumulation, the hope of its final eradication.*. . . Of one thing I am certain, that as the passage of slaves from one state to another would not make a slave of a single human being, who would not be so without it, so their diffusion over a greater surface would make them individually happier, and proportionally facilitate the accomplishment of their emancipation, by dividing the burthen on a greater number of coadjutors†. . . and facilitate the means of getting finally rid of it — an event more anxiously wished by those on whom it presses than by the noisy pretenders to exclusive humanity.'‡

A barren attempt, which will always be so, as long as, following Jefferson's example, the statesmen of the South shall sacrifice justice and good policy on the altar of popularity!

In the secret deliberations of congress, in his private conversations, in his intimate correspondence, in his posthumous memoirs, Jefferson has made it a point of honour to express himself explicitly on the subject of slavery. He could not think without emotion and alarm of the miseries which slavery brings with it, and the terrible consequences of the antagonism between the two races; he did not choose to be responsible for it in the eyes of posterity, but neither did he wish to come into collision with the opinions of his contemporaries. 'If something is not done,' he wrote to Saint-George Tucker, after the massacre of the whites in St. Domingo, 'and soon done, we shall be the murderers of our own children,'§ and to absolve himself in his own

* Jefferson's Works, vol. vii. p. 182; Letter to R. Rush, October 20, 1820.

† Ibid. vol. vii. p. 159; Letter to J. Holmes, April 22, 1820.

‡ Ibid. vol. vii. p. 194; Letter to M. De la Fayette, December 26, 1820.

§ Ibid. vol. iv. p. 196; August 28, 1797.

eyes for having done nothing, he felt himself constrained to say that 'if he had continued in the councils of his own state it should never have been out of sight.'*

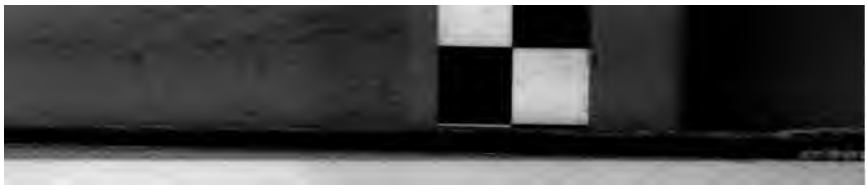
He deceived himself: 'I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just,'† was his exclamation in his 'Notes on Virginia,' written at the request of M. de Marbois and intended only for private circulation; but when General de Chastellux asked permission to publish them in the 'Journal de Physique,' Jefferson would not consent to grant it, except on the express condition of his suppressing all the attacks in it upon slavery.‡ The 'Journal de Physique' might fall into the hands of the first comer. He has himself apprised us that he was equally averse to the suppression or expression of his opinion, to be condemned to taciturnity, or to run the risk of being compromised; 'I never had an opinion in politics or religion which I was afraid to own . . . My great wish is to go on in a strict but silent performance of my duty; to avoid attracting notice, and to keep my name out of newspapers, because I find the pain of a little censure, even when it is unfounded, is more acute than the pleasure of much praise!'§

* Jefferson's Works, vol. vi. p. 456; Letter to M. Barrow, May 1, 1815.

† Ibid. vol. viii. p. 404; *Notes on Virginia.*

‡ Ibid. vol. i. p. 339; Letter to General de Chastellux, Paris, June 7, 1785. The 'Notes on Virginia,' written in 1781, were printed for the first time at Paris in 1784, then presented by Jefferson to a certain number of his friends. It was thus General de Chastellux came to hear of it. In spite of his desire to avoid the works being too generally circulated, Jefferson could not prevent its getting into a great number of hands. M. Barrois, a Paris bookseller, having obtained possession of a copy, had it translated and published. The translation was so very bad, that Jefferson made up his mind to publish the original, which appeared in London in 1787.

§ Ibid. vol. ii. p. 587; Letter to F. Hopkinson, March 13, 1789.



With a singular hardihood of mind and language, Jefferson was devoid of political courage.

Was he as devoid of military as of political courage? His enemies have frequently asserted he was, and they have drawn their proofs from his behaviour when governor of Virginia during the invasion of that colony by the English troops in 1781. It is acknowledged on all hands that, as long as the theatre of war was remote, as long as the military duty of the governor was confined to providing men, money, provisions, military stores, and information for the army of General Washington before New York, and that of General Green in the Carolinas, he showed much activity, judgement, and decision. Afterwards, when the danger approached, whether it was that the attacks of the enemy were really irresistible, or that Jefferson too easily concluded they were so, he became paralysed and inactive. Arnold, followed by a few hundred soldiers, was permitted to throw himself upon Virginia as upon a prey, to penetrate to the very heart of a province which could boast of possessing fifty thousand militia-men; to occupy the capital, to drive before him the governor and the assembly, and to fall back upon the coast after laying waste everything in his way. This sudden invasion became the signal for a series of *razzias*, which cost the Virginian proprietors more than sixty-five millions of francs, and more than once endangered the lives of the patriots. The assembly sitting at Charlotteville was within an ace of falling into the hands of Colonel Tarleton. Surprised himself in his house by a body of cavalry, Jefferson was indebted for his safety entirely to the speed of his horse:

'Would it be believed, were it not known, that this flight

from a troop of horse, whose whole legion, too, was within supporting distance, has been the subject, with party writers, of volumes of reproach on me, serious or sarcastic? That it has been sung in verse, and said in humble prose, that, forgetting the noble example of the hero of La Mancha and his windmills, I declined a combat singly against a troop, in which victory would have been so glorious?' *

Jefferson never had any great desire to imitate Don Quixote, and it would be ungracious to reproach him with it, if, at a time when every citizen was becoming a soldier, and every governor might be called upon to transform himself into a general, he had not been obliged to confess, a little too late, his want of aptness for the profession of arms:

'From a belief that, under the pressure of the invasion under which we were then labouring, the public would have more confidence in a military chief, and that the military commander, being invested with the civil power also, both might be wielded with more energy, promptitude, and effect, for the defence of the state, I resigned the administration at the end of my second year, and General Nelson was appointed to succeed me.' †

Right or wrong, the masses are not much disposed to comprehend such acts of self-denial. Accused by popular clamour of having omitted to put the country in a state of defence, of having attended too much to his personal safety, and of having deserted in the hour of danger a post entrusted to him by the confidence of his fellow-citizens, Jefferson was for a little while threatened with the necessity of having to answer before the assembly for his conduct. But the capture of York Town by Washington occurring soon afterwards,

* Jefferson's Works, vol. ix. p. 219.
† Ibid. vol. i. p. 50; *Autobiography*.



effaced in Virginia the recollection of the sufferings she had endured, calmed the general irritation, and brought back public opinion to a state of feeling, either more indulgent, or more just. The proposal for citing him before the assembly fell to the ground; and this body, touched at the excessive humiliation which Jefferson had undergone, even passed a resolution, in which, 'in order to remove all undeserved censure, it addressed its sincere thanks to Thomas Jefferson, Esq., for his impartial, upright, and efficient administration,'* but dwelt at the same time upon his civil qualifications with an emphasis which might very well pass for irony, and which somewhat spoiled the consolation offered to the ex-governor. He had great need of consolation. The sarcasms to which he had been exposed had bitterly galled him; his confidence in himself was shaken, and though there were times when he often made more noise about his passion for retreat than then, there never was one in which his disgust for public life was more sincere. Colonel Munroe urged him to return to it; but he refused: —

'I examined well my heart,' was his reply, 'to know whether it were thoroughly cured of every principle of political ambition; whether no lurking particle remained which might leave me uneasy, when reduced within the limits of mere private life: I became satisfied that every fibre of that passion was thoroughly eradicated. I examined also, in other views, my right to withdraw. I considered that I had been thirteen years engaged in public service; that, during that time, I had so totally abandoned all attention to my private affairs as to permit them to run into great disorder and ruin; that I had now a family advanced in years, which required my attention and instruction; that to these was added the

* Jefferson's Works, vol. ix. p. 218; December 19, 1781.

hopeful offspring of a deceased friend, whose memory must be for ever dear to me, and who have no other reliance for being rendered useful to themselves or their country; that, by a constant sacrifice of time, labour, parental and friendly duties, I had, so far from gaining the affection of my countrymen, which was the only reward I ever asked, or could have felt, even lost the small estimation I had before possessed.

'That however I might have comforted myself under the disapprobation of the well-meaning but uninformed people, yet that of their representatives was a shock on which I had not calculated. That this, indeed, had been followed by an exculpatory declaration; but, in the meantime, I had been suspected in the eyes of the world, without the least hint, then or afterwards, being made public which might restrain them from supposing that I stood arraigned for treason of the heart, and not merely weakness of the mind; and I felt that these injuries, for such they have been since acknowledged, had inflicted a wound on my spirit which will only be cured by the all-healing grave.' *

A few months afterwards the grave opened at his side, not for him, but, as he said, 'for the cherished companion of my life, in whose affections, unabated on both sides, I had lived the last ten years in unchequered happiness.' † His grief was deep and touching. One of his daughters, Mrs. Randolph, informs us how he nursed and wept for her, whose death made him insensible to the smarting wounds he thought he never would forget except in his own grave: —

* Jefferson's Works, vol. i. p. 318; May 27, 1782.

† Ibid. p. 151; *Autobiography*. Jefferson married 1772. His wife, six years younger than him, was the widow of Mr. Bathurst Skelton, and the daughter of Mr. Wayles, a lawyer of celebrity in Virginia.



'As a nurse, no female ever had more tenderness or anxiety. He nursed my poor mother, in turn, with Aunt Carr and his own sisters; sitting up with her, and administering her medicines and drink to the last. For four months that she lingered, he was never out of calling. When not at her bedside, he was writing in a small room that opened immediately at the head of her bed. A moment before the closing scene, he was led from the room, almost in a state of insensibility, by his sister, Mrs. Carr, who, with difficulty, got him into his library, where he fainted, and remained so long insensible that they became apprehensive he never would revive. The scene that followed I did not witness; but the violence of his grief (when, by stealth, I entered his room at night) I dare not trust myself to describe. He kept his room three weeks, during which I was never a moment from his side. He walked almost incessantly, night and day, lying down only occasionally, when nature was completely exhausted, on a pallet that had been brought in during his long fainting fit. My aunts remained constantly with him for some weeks, I do not now remember how many. When, at last, he left his room, he rode out, and from that time he was incessantly on horseback, rambling about the mountain in the least frequented roads, and just as often through the woods. In these melancholy rambles I was his constant companion, a solitary witness to many a violent burst of grief.'*

He at length recovered his calm a little, and on November 26, 1782, two months after his wife's death, he wrote to the Chevalier de Chastellux: —

'Your letter found me a little emerging from the stupor of mind which had rendered me as dead to the world as was she whose loss occasioned it. Your letter recalled to my memory that there were persons still living of much value to me. . . . . Before that event my scheme of life had been determined, I had folded myself in the arms of

* Tucker's Life of Jefferson, vol. i. p. 171.

retirement, and rested all prospects of future happiness on domestic and literary objects. A single event wiped away all my plans, and left me a blank which I had not the spirits to fill up. In this state of mind an appointment from congress found me, requiring me to cross the Atlantic; and that temptation might be added to duty, I was informed, at the same time, from his Excellency the Chevalier de la Luzerne, that a vessel of force would be sailing about the middle of December, in which you would be passing to France. I accepted the appointment, and my only object now is, to so hasten over those obstacles which would retard my departure, as to be ready to join you in your voyage, fondly measuring your affection by my own, and presuming your consent.'*

'Residence in a polite court, and the society of *literati* of the first order,'† was, since the United States had a diplomatic corps, the favourite dream of Jefferson. Twice already had congress given him the opportunity of realising it; but anxiety about his family, of which, he says, 'I could not leave them, nor expose them to the dangers of the sea, and capture by British ships,'‡ had alone prevented, in 1776 and in 1781, his becoming Dr. Franklin's colleague in Paris. Appointed in 1782, on the motion of his friend Madison, to take part in the negotiations for peace with England, he could no longer resist the temptation. After the political and domestic misfortunes he had experienced, his 'mind concurred in recommending the change of scene proposed,'§ and he was awaiting with impatience the opportunity of employing himself upon a new stage, when his expectations were disappointed by the news of the conclusion of peace. He returned home

* Jefferson's Works, vol. i. p. 322.

† Ibid. p. 204; Letter to Franklin, August 13, 1777.

‡ Ibid. vol. i. p. 51; *Autobiography.*

§ Ibid.



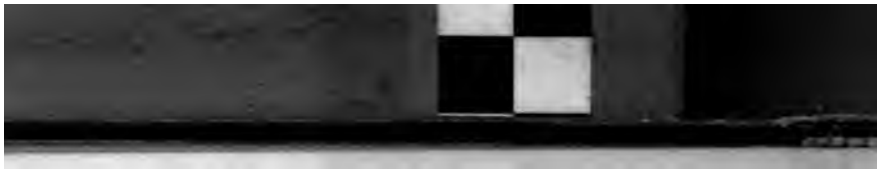
depressed and discontented; but being decided upon not remaining in seclusion, he got himself sent to congress by his state. This evidently was but a make-shift. Ill organised, incapable of enforcing obedience to its own requisitions, congress, since the peace, had lost the little authority it was nominally invested with in difficult times, and was vainly struggling to recover it. Jefferson could not possibly find himself at home there, and in the midst of the long and monotonous debates on the monetary system of the United States, on the mode of ratifying the treaty with England, and on the government of the western territory, his thoughts were fixed upon Europe. Hence, in a report on the state of external relations, he made it a special point to bring out most prominently the necessity of concluding treaties of commerce with all nations, and of promptly opening negotiations on this subject, having Paris for their centre, and at which he undertook to be present. In vain did the delegates of Massachusetts endeavour to overcome his fancy for diplomacy by reducing the salaries of foreign ministers from $11,000 to $9,000. He was not covetous, and he was ambitious. Not being able to propose his own services to congress, he had recourse for this purpose to the kind offices of one of his Virginian colleagues. The suggestion once laid before congress, immediately obtained its assent, and a general commission, composed of Jefferson, Franklin, and John Adams, was instructed to negotiate simultaneously commercial treaties with England, Hamburgh, Prussia, Denmark, Russia, Austria, the Republic of Venice, the Holy See, the King of Naples, Tuscany, Sardinia, the Republic of Genoa, Spain, Portugal, the Porte, the Regency of Algiers, Tripoli, Tunis, and the Empire of Morocco.

CHAPTER VI.

1784—1790.

JEFFERSON IN PARIS — THE UNITED STATES IN BAD ODOUR THROUGHOUT EUROPE AT THE TIME OF HIS ARRIVAL IN FRANCE — JEFFERSON'S NATIONAL CONCEIT — HE DEFENDS THE AMERICAN CLIMATE AGAINST BUFFON — HE CONTRASTS WITH PRIDE AMERICAN MANNERS WITH FRENCH — HE MAKES USE OF THE CORRUPTIONS WHICH HE SEES TO WARN HIS AMERICAN FRIENDS AGAINST THE VICES OF MONARCHY — HE ADVISES HIS FRENCH FRIENDS TO TAKE THE ENGLISH CONSTITUTION FOR THEIR MODEL — OPINIONS OF JEFFERSON WITH RESPECT TO ENGLAND AND FRANCE — HE IS SEDUCED BY THE ATTRACTIONS OF FRENCH SOCIETY, AND SUFFERS HIMSELF TO BE CARRIED AWAY BY THE SPIRIT OF THE TIMES — HIS RELIGIOUS ADVICE TO A COLLEGIAN — THE GOVERNED ARE LAMBS, THE GOVERNING ARE WOLVES — EXCUSES A SOCIALIST INSURRECTION IN MASSACHUSETTS — HIS SYMPATHY WITH THE EVENTS OF '89 IS AT FIRST MINGLED WITH UNEASINESS — HIS OPTIMISM GETS THE UPPER HAND, THOUGH HIS ADVICE IS NOT FOLLOWED BY THE PATRIOTS — HIS THEORY TOUCHING THE RIGHT OF BANKRUPTCY, AND THAT OF REMODELLING SOCIETY AT THE END OF EVERY NINETEEN YEARS — HE RETURNS TO AMERICA MORE THAN EVER THE FRIEND OF FRANCE; MORE RADICAL, AND MORE SCEPTICAL THAN ON HIS ARRIVAL IN EUROPE.

THE residence of Jefferson in Europe is one of the most curious portions of his life, less on account of what he did than of what he saw and thought. A radical of the New World, his mind still imbued with Anglo-Saxon traditions, coming to observe Europe, and borrowing from it, with modifications of his own, the anarchical ideas and passions which were then



manifesting themselves in the ancient régime, is a spectacle interesting in itself, and which deserves to be carefully studied if we desire thoroughly to appreciate the part which Jefferson afterwards played in his country, at the head of the democratic party. It was in Paris he learned to abhor the whole social organisation of Europe, and everything appertaining to it then still existing in America; it was in Paris that he learned to hate the power both of the aristocracy and clergy, which till then he had opposed without any irritation; it was in Paris that, swept along by the philosophical torrent of the eighteenth century, this naturally adventurous intelligence became audacious to a degree bordering on madness. Everything he sees is called in question. The great problems of political science are before him, and he enters upon their consideration with a presumptuous intrepidity and a dogmatic assurance, arising as much from levity as strength of mind, and indicating more taste than aptitude for philosophical generalisation. He wishes to render an account to himself of his ideas, his passions, his instincts, and he exaggerates them by giving them expression through sharp and questionable maxims to which he has the good sense not to attach too much importance himself. He abandons himself to chimerical and anarchical theories, without, in the presence of facts, ever entirely losing sight, whether in council or in action, of that political intelligence and that clear comprehension of liberty, which he had received as a heritage from his forefathers, and of which all French radicals have been destitute.

He reached Paris on August 6, 1784, bringing with him his instructions. Franklin could not resist treating them with a little irony:—

'You will see,' he wrote to John Adams, 'that a good deal of business is cut out for us — treaties to be made with, I think, twenty powers in two years — so that we are not likely to eat the bread of idleness; and that we may not surfeit by eating too much, our masters have diminished our allowance. I commend their economy, and shall imitate it by diminishing my expense. Our too liberal entertainment of our countrymen here has been reported at home by our guests, to our disadvantage, and has given offence. They must be contented for the future, as I am, with plain beef and pudding. The readers of Connecticut newspapers ought not to be troubled with any more accounts of our extravagance. For my own part, if I could sit down to dinner on a piece of their excellent salt pork and pumpkin, I would not give a farthing for all the luxuries of Paris.' *

But it was for the researches of French intelligence that Jefferson was most eager. He very soon saw that he must look to them for compensation for many mistaken hopes, and as substitutes for the pleasure of cutting a great figure, and accomplishing great things during his embassy. The United States were at that time justly decried everywhere. Congress was paying its creditors even less than its agents; the American merchants were imitating congress; the American courts of justice were protecting the merchants; the State legislatures were backing the courts, were censuring the federal government for not approving their sympathy with bankrupts, were refusing to obey its requisitions, and were usurping its powers without at all turning them to better account. It might be fairly believed, and it was believed in Europe, that there was no longer in America either government or justice. The moment was certainly not an opportune one for forming alliances. In spite of the respect which

* John Adams's Works, vol. viii. p. 208.



Franklin everywhere commanded, and which he reflected to a certain degree upon his colleagues, the position of the American commissioners was often a false and disagreeable one. Assailed by the claims of French officers who were still waiting for their pay; challenged by England and France to explain the violation of the financial and diplomatic engagements which the *Articles of Confederation* * empowered congress to make but not to execute; taunted by the London newspapers, desiring to know if they were sufficiently numerous to represent thirteen small rival republics; exposed even in the drawing rooms of Paris to hear their government reproached for its incompetence and bad faith, and their country for its state of dissension and anarchy, they had scarcely anything else left them than ardently to wish that the excess of the evil might make their fellow citizens sensible of the necessity of a remedy and the urgency of reforming their constitution: —

'Among many good qualities,' declared Jefferson, 'which my countrymen possess, some of a different character unhappily mix themselves. The most remarkable are indolence, extravagance, and infidelity to their engagements.† . . . American reputation in Europe is not such as to be flattering to its citizens.‡. . . We do not find it easy to make commercial arrangements in Europe: there is a want of confidence in us.§. . . Two circumstances are particularly objected to us — the non-payment of our debts, and the want of energy in our

* This was the name of the federal convention which preceded the actual constitution of the United States.

† Jefferson's Works, vol. ii. p. 193; Letter to A. Donald, July 28, 1787.

‡ Ibid. vol. i. p. 518; Letter to A. Stuart, January 25, 1786.

§ Ibid. vol. i. p. 509; Letter to Major-General Green, January 12, 1786.



government.*. . . I can add with truth, that it was not till these symptoms appeared in America that I have been able to discover the smallest token of respect in Europe.'†

Language like this argues a great boldness of self-rebuke, but men of Anglo-Saxon race are not very prone to push their national humility too far, and, after making the most painful avowals, we may always expect to see an abrupt reaction of patriotic pride in them. In spite of Europe and his own dissatisfaction, Jefferson was still convinced of the superiority of his country over every other :—

'If all the evils which can arise among us from the republican form of government, from this day to the day of judgement, could be put into a scale against what this country suffers from its monarchical form in a week, or England in a month, the latter would preponderate. Consider the contents of the 'Red Book' in England, or the 'Almanach Royale' of France, and say what a people gain by monarchy.‡ . . . There is modesty often, which does itself injury: our countrymen possess this. They do not know their own superiority.'§

A rash exaggeration, indeed, which in any other mouth would have passed for irony! But Jefferson was quite serious in it, and so anxious was he to find arguments in support of his theory, that he appealed in proof of it to the reforms as well as to the abuses of the ancient régime, to the edict of 1787 restoring civil rights to Protestants as well as to the revocation of the

* Jefferson's Works, vol. i. p. 518; Letter to A. Stuart, January 25, 1786.

† Ibid. vol. i. p. 413; Letter to James Madison, September 1, 1785.

‡ Ibid. vol. ii. p. 221; Letter to M. Hawkins, August 4, 1787.

§ Ibid. vol. ii. p. 350; Letter to William Rutlege, February 2, 1788.



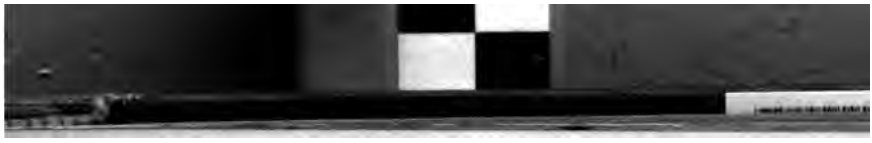
edict of Nantes; and instead of thanking Louis XVI. for the first step he had made towards the principle of religious liberty, he took a haughty pleasure in showing how much France fell short of the point which America had reached:—

'The long-expected edict of the Protestants at length appears here. Its analysis is this: It is an acknowledgement (hitherto withheld by the laws) that Protestants can beget children, and that they can die, and be offensive, unless buried. It does not give them permission to think, to speak, or to worship. It enumerates the humiliations to which they shall continue to be unjustly exposed. What are we to think of the condition of the human mind in a country where such a wretched thing as this has thrown the state into convulsions; and how must we bless our own situation in a country the most illiterate peasant of which is a Solomon compared with the authors of this law?'*

It was not only of the liberty of his country, and of the political spirit of his fellow citizens, that Jefferson was proud. At a moment when so many superficial observers were regarding the American revolution as an abortion, and were doubting whether the new republic could ever obtain admission into the family of nations, he had confidence in the future of the United States, and he spoke of their power of expansion with all the arrogance of an American annexionist of our own days:—

'Our confederacy must be viewed as the nest from which all America, north and south, is to be peopled. We should take care, too, not to think it for the interest of that great

* Jefferson's Works.—[Surely Jefferson might naturally and pardonably exult that the religious tolerance of his own country was disfigured by no such narrowness.]



continent to press too soon on the Spaniards. Those countries cannot be in better hands. My fear is, that they are too feeble to hold them till our population can be sufficiently advanced to gain it from them, piece by piece.' *

This haughty conviction of the great destinies of his race could not keep Jefferson from condescending to the petty susceptibilities of national vanity. Frequently wounded by the sarcasms of the English newspapers, his patriotism had become singularly touchy, and at times displayed itself with a simpleness amusing enough to see in a man anything but simple. The farmers of New Jersey had been for a long time in the habit of making the wheels of their carts with tires of a single piece. A London wheelwright, to whom Franklin had communicated this fact, took out a patent for it. A French newspaper of the day gave him the whole credit of it, and affirmed, in its enthusiasm for the marvel of the hour, that the patentee, a man of great acquirement, had borrowed his idea from Homer. On this Jefferson thought himself called upon to take up his pen:—

'I see,' he said, writing to M. de Crevecœuer, 'by the journal of this morning, that they are robbing us of another of our inventions to give it to the English. . . The writer in the paper supposes the English workman got his idea from Homer. But it is more likely the Jersey farmer got his idea from thence, because ours are the only farmers who can read Homer. . . You, who write French well and readily, should write a line for the journal, to reclaim the honour of our farmers.' †

The abuse of the climate of America, which had become the fashion, through the Abbé Raynal's

* Jefferson's Works, vol. i. p. 518; Letter to A. Stuart, January 25, 1786.

† Ibid. vol. ii. p. 97; January 15, 1787.



'Philosophical History of India,' was a still greater annoyance to him. It had already rather disturbed Franklin, and afforded him a charming occasion of displaying his great art in illustrating a truth in a practical way. One day the witty Doctor was giving a dinner at Passy; half the guests were Americans, the other half French; among the latter the Abbé Raynal, who soon went to work developing his favourite theory with his usual eloquence. To hear him, all races of animals were degenerating in America, and man himself was not escaping this fatal influence. Franklin threw a quick glance round the table: 'Come,' says he, 'M. l'Abbé, let us try this question by the fact before us. We are here one-half Americans, and one-half French, and it happens that the Americans have placed themselves on one side of the table, and our French friends are on the other. Let both parties rise, and we will see on which side nature has degenerated.' Franklin had cleverly contrived to take advantage of a singular piece of good luck; his American friends were all tall and robust; he himself of an imposing presence. The Abbé Raynal's Frenchmen, on the contrary, were very small; and as to the Abbé himself, he was remarkably diminutive. Obliged to decline the challenge, he would not, however, acknowledge himself beaten. 'That proves nothing, Doctor,' replied the Abbé; 'great men are everywhere the exceptions.' *

Envious of so capital a hit, and anxious to tread in the steps of his venerable colleague, Jefferson also made up his mind to break a lance on behalf of the beauty of the American races, and this against Buffon. It was

* Jefferson's Works, vol. viii. p. 501; *Anecdotes of Dr. Franklin.*



not man, but animals that were now to be discussed, and, less fortunate than Franklin, Jefferson had not his proofs at hand. To demonstrate to his illustrious opponent that he had been unjust to God's works in the New World, Jefferson begged General Sullivan to procure him the skeleton and skin of an American *elan*. The honour of the country was at stake. The General took the field with as much zeal and vigour as if he had been ordered to cut off a division of the British army. The campaign cost one thousand francs. Before knowing the details Jefferson thought the figure rather high; but after receiving the General's report, he had reason to congratulate himself on not having to pay still dearer for an expedition, the striking episodes of which he thus recounts himself:—

'The troops he employed sallied forth,' as he writes me, 'in the month of March—much snow—a herd attacked—one killed in the wilderness—a road to cut twenty miles—the animal drawn by hand from the frontiers to his house—bones to be cleaned, &c. &c. &c. In fine, he puts himself to an infinitude of trouble, more than I meant: he did it cheerfully, and I feel myself really under obligations to him. That the tragedy might not want a proper catastrophe, the box, bones, and all are lost; so that this chapter of Natural History will still remain a blank; but I have written to the General not to fill it up; I will leave it for my successor to do so, whenever I shall make my bow here.' *

It was not in France that Jefferson could have learned these somewhat childish refinements of national vanity, for it was then the fashion in Paris to fall into the opposite excess. People no longer asked, 'How can

* Jefferson's Works, vol. ii. p. 284; Letter to Colonel Smith, September 28, 1787.



anyone be Parisian?' It now began to be the style to say, 'How can anyone be French?' They made the mistake of thinking that it was less ridiculous to be abusing one's country on all occasions, than to be immoderately puffing it. The indiscreet revelations of one of his French friends had in all probability laid bare to Jefferson's observation the moral sores of the brilliant society in the midst of which, owing to his position, he was living; for, within a year after his arrival in Paris, he was already familiar with those mysteries of family life into which, even in those countries where laxity of manners is greatest, it is always difficult for a stranger to penetrate without a guide.

'But you are perhaps curious to know,' he wrote to M. Bellini, 'how this new scene has struck a savage of the mountains of America. Not advantageously, I assure you. I find the general fate of humanity here most deplorable. Intrigues of love occupy the younger, and those of ambition the elder part of the great. Conjugal love having no existence among them, domestic happiness, of which that is the basis, is utterly unknown. In lieu of this are substituted pursuits which nourish and invigorate all our bad passions, and which offer only moments of ecstacy amidst days and months of restlessness and torment. Much, very much, inferior this to the tranquil, permanent felicity with which domestic society in America blesses most of its inhabitants; leaving them to follow steadily those pursuits which health and reason approve, and rendering truly delicious the intervals of those pursuits. . . . I will add only one sentiment more of that character, that is, nourish peace with their persons, but war against their manners. . . Let us view the disadvantages of sending a youth to Europe. . . He learns to consider fidelity to the marriage-bed as an ungentlemanly practice, and inconsistent with happiness.'*

* Jefferson's Works, vol. i. pp. 444, 395, 468.



Jefferson was not, however, so stern a censor as to be unwilling to find an explanation and excuse for the ease and frivolity of French manners :—

'Perhaps, too, their manners may be the best calculated for happiness to a people in their situation, but I am convinced they fall far short of effecting a happiness so temperate, so uniform, and so lasting as is generally enjoyed with us. Fallacious as the pursuits of happiness are, they seem, on the whole, to furnish the most effectual abstraction from a contemplation of the hardness of their government. Indeed, it is difficult to conceive how so good a people, with so good a king, so well-disposed rulers in general, so genial a climate, so fertile a soil, should be rendered so ineffectual for producing human happiness by one single curse — that of a bad form of government. . . . . She is the wealthiest, but worst governed country on earth, and her finances utterly unprepared for war. . . . This country is among the lowest in point of credit. . . . This country cannot borrow at all there (Holland).' *

We have no right to expect from Jefferson a very profound acquaintance with the vices of that régime, the bad effects of which he has sketched with so much force. Had he been called upon to correct them, it is possible he would have ended by understanding them; but he was one of those men who are clear sighted and far sighted only when the time for action comes. As long as he confined himself to the part of a mere passive spectator, he could in general give himself the facile intellectual satisfaction of observing with partiality and levity, and of finding in what he saw a warranty for the revolutionary commonplaces which he thought it useful to repeat to his fellow-countrymen. To fortify them against the seductions of monarchy he

* Jefferson's Works, vol. i. pp. 394, 353; vol. ii. pp. 374, 376.



did not hesitate to put down, without further inquiry, to the account of royalty, the noblesse, and the clergy, all the calamities of ancient France:—

'If anybody thinks that kings, nobles, or priests are good conservators of the public happiness, send him here. . . . I rely, too, on the good sense of the people for remedy, whereas the evils of monarchial government are beyond remedy. If any of our countrymen wish for a king, give them Æsop's fable of the frogs who asked for a king; if this does not cure them, send them to Europe. They will go back good republicans. . . And, in short, to besiege the throne of Heaven with eternal prayers, to extirpate from creation this class of human lions, tigers, and mammoths, called kings; from whom, let him perish who does not say, "Good Lord deliver us."'*

In spite of the violence of his style, Jefferson was not enough of a fanatic to address these elegant tirades to those by whom in Europe he wished to be taken at his word, and he would have been very careful not to indulge himself in such declamation to his French friends. Far from preaching to them the overthrow of the monarchy, and the extirpation of the *mammoths*, he recommended them prudence in their reforms, moderation in their wishes, a spirit of conciliation and compromise, a distrust of innovations as yet untried; and he proposed to them as a model, not the American republic, but the English constitutional monarchy. On February 28, 1787, a few days after the opening of the Assembly of Notables, he wrote M. de la Fayette thus:—

'Keeping the good model of your neighbouring country before your eyes, you may get on, step by step, towards a

* Jefferson's Works, vol. ii. pp. 7, 217, 253.



good constitution. Though that model is not perfect, yet as it would unite more suffrages than any new one which could be proposed, it is better to make that the object. If every advance is to be purchased by filling the royal coffers with gold, it will be gold well employed. The King, who means so well, should be encouraged to repeat these assemblies. You see how we republicans are apt to preach when we get on politics.'

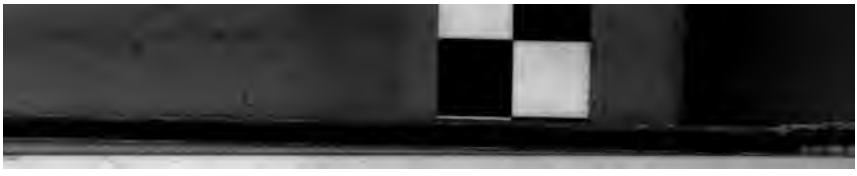
And to the Comtesse de Tessé, March 20, 1787 :—

'Should they attempt more than the established habits of the people are ripe for, they may lose all, and retard indefinitely the ultimate object of their aim.' *

When the question in hand was rural economy, just as when it turned upon political organisation, it was still the example of England he recommended to the French; and after a long agricultural tour which he had just made in the east and south of France, he wrote to the Marquis de la Fayette :—

'I have been pleased to find among the people a less degree of physical misery than I had expected. They are generally well clothed, and have a plenty of food, not animal indeed, but vegetable, which is as wholesome. Perhaps they are overworked, the excess of the rent required by the landlord obliging them to too many hours of labour in order to produce that, and wherewith to feed and clothe themselves. The soil of Champagne and Burgundy I have found more universally good than I had expected, and as I could not help making a comparison with England, I found that comparison more unfavourable to the latter than is generally admitted. The soil, the climate, and the productions are superior to those of England, and the husbandry as good, except in one point, that of manure. In England, long leases for twenty-one years, or three lives—to wit, that of the farmer, his wife,

* Jefferson's Works, vol. ii. pp. 131, 134.



and son, renewed by the son as soon as he comes to the possession, for his own life, his wife's, and eldest child, and so on — render the farms there almost hereditary, make it worth the farmer's while to manure the lands highly, and give the landlord an opportunity of occasionally making his rent keep pace with the improved state of the lands. Here the leases are either during pleasure, or for three, six, or nine years, which does not give the farmer time to repay himself for the expensive operation of well manuring, and therefore he manures ill, or not at all. I suppose that, could the practice of leasing for three lives be introduced in the whole kingdom, it would, within the term of your life, increase agricultural productions fifty per cent.' *

In spite of this conviction of the political and economical superiority of the English, Jefferson felt no sympathy for them. He still looked upon them as enemies. The hostility to them he had so naturally imbibed during the war of independence had been daily assuming, since the peace, a more bitter and rooted character. American diplomacy had everywhere come into contact with them, through the whole course of its negotiations. Thanks to their malevolence, and the ill-repute they had everywhere fastened on the United States, the efforts of the general commission for contracting new alliances in Europe had failed, and to such a degree that its members joyfully hailed the expiration of their powers. Franklin had returned to Philadelphia. Appointed his successor in Paris, Jefferson met with nothing but marks of kindness from the government and the higher circles. Despatched as minister plenipotentiary to London, John Adams, on the contrary, met with nothing but ill-will and coldness. Not only did the English Cabinet refuse to execute the treaty of

* Jefferson's Works, vol. ii. p. 135.



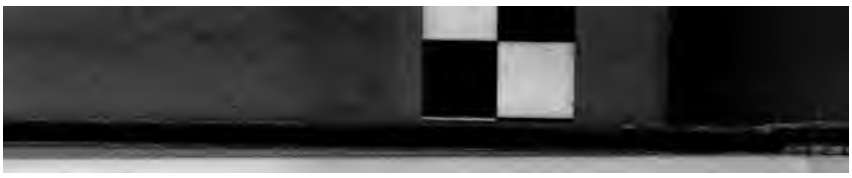
1783, to evacuate the territory of the Union, and to open its ports to American ships, but even to send a minister to New York, and to return the new republic the compliment it had received. In vain had Jefferson, to give greater weight to the claims of the United States, gone and joined his colleague in London. At the end of a few weeks he returned to Paris without having obtained anything, deeply irritated at the ungracious reception he had met with from the King and Queen, and at the little attention shown him by his former fellow-countrymen.

'Congress cannot, consistently with their own honour and dignity, renew my commission to this Court,' wrote Adams to Jefferson, March 1, 1787, 'and I assure you, I should hold it so inconsistent with my own honour and dignity, little as that may be, that, if it were possible for congress to forget theirs, I would not forget mine, but send their commission back to them, unless a minister were sent from His Britannic Majesty to congress.'*

Jefferson's ill-humour assumed a keener expression, and on September 20, 1787, he wrote to John Adams respecting the troubles in Holland, and the war which seemed on the point of breaking out between England and France:—

'We, I hope, shall be left free to avail ourselves of the advantages of neutrality; and yet much I fear the English, or rather their stupid king, will force us out of it. For thus I reason, by forcing us into the war against them, they will be engaged in an expensive land war, as well as a sea war. Common sense dictates, therefore, that they should let us remain neuter: *ergo*, they will not let us remain neuter. I never yet found any other general rule for foretelling what

* Adams's Works, vol. viii. p. 434.



they will do, but that of examining what they ought not to do.'*

Jefferson did not confound neutrality with indifference. While recognising in principle 'that the United States should take no part whatever in the quarrels of Europe, but live in peace and commercial relations with all nations,'† he thought that his country might and ought to have diplomatic preferences, like its friends, hate its enemies, and peacefully prove it to them. He could not understand how anyone could think in America of 'putting the commerce of France and England on the same footing.'

'To say,' he observes, 'in excuse, that gratitude is never to enter into the motives of national conduct, is to revive a principle which has been buried for centuries, with its kindred principles of the lawfulness of assassination, poison, perjury, &c. All of these were legitimate principles in the dark ages which intervened between ancient and modern civilization, but exploded and held in just horror in the eighteenth century. I know but one code of morality for men, whether acting singly or collectively. He who says, I will be a rogue when I act in company with a hundred others, but an honest man when I act alone, will be believed in the former assertion, but not in the latter.'‡

An excellent piece of morality, but of which Jefferson too often lost sight to make it possible for us to take it as a clue to his policy. But it was not only by duty and gratitude that he was attached to France; he loved it also for itself. The 'savage of the mountains of America'§ had been seduced by the attractions of

* Jefferson's Works, vol. ii. p. 283.

† Ibid. vol. ii. p. 533; Letter to Washington, Dec. 4, 1788.

‡ Ibid. vol. iii. p. 99; Letter to Madison.

§ Ibid. vol. i. p. 444; Letter to M. Bellini, Sept. 30, 1785.



French society — by its amiable politeness, its intellectual activity, its generous aspirations towards liberty. He always continued to be under the fascination, and thirty years after his return to America he finished his account of what he had seen in Paris by exclaiming :—

'And here, I cannot leave this great and good country, without expressing my sense of its pre-eminence of character among the nations of the earth. . . . In a comparison of this with other countries, we have the proof of primacy, which was given to Themistocles, after the battle of Salamis. Every General voted to himself the first reward of valour, and the second to Themistocles. So, ask the travelled inhabitant of any nation, in what country on earth would you rather live? Certainly, in my own, where are all my friends, my relations, and the earliest and sweetest affections of my life. Which would be your second choice? France?' *

In recollecting past pleasures we are prone to exaggerate them, but there was no exaggeration in Jefferson's affectionate remembrance of France. His correspondence from Paris attests it :—

'I know,' he says, writing to Madame de Corny, 'your taste for the works of art gives you a little disposition to Anglomania. Their mechanics certainly exceed all others in some lines. But be just to your own nation. They have not patience, it is true, to set rubbing a piece of steel from morning to night, as a lethargic Englishman will do, full charged with porter. But do not their benevolence, their cheerfulness, their amiability, when compared with the growling temper and manners of the people among whom you are, compensate for their want of patience? I am in hopes that when the splendour of their shops, which is all that is worth looking at in London, shall have lost their charm of novelty, you will turn a wistful eye to the people of Paris, and find that you cannot be so happy with any others.' † 'I am much pleased' he says

* Jefferson's Works, vol. i. p. 107.

† Ibid. vol. ii. p. 161; June 30, 1785.



in another letter, 'with the people of this country. The roughness of the human mind is so thoroughly rubbed off with them, that it seems as if one might glide through a whole life among them without a jostle.* With respect to what are termed polite manners, without sacrificing too much the sincerity of language, I would wish my countrymen to adopt just so much of European politeness, as to be ready to make all those little sacrifices of self, which really render European manners amiable, and relieve society from the disagreeable scenes to which rudeness often subjects it.'†

In what degree had Jefferson succeeded in transferring to himself that delicate gaiety, that subtle gallantry, which he proposed as a model to the Americans? His own attempts do not appear to have been very happy, at all events, if we may judge by a certain dialogue between 'his head and heart,' which he presented to an English lady of his acquaintance, who had been cruel enough to desert him:—

'*Head.* I have often told you, during its course, that you were imprudently engaging your affections, under circumstances that must have cost you a great deal of pain; that the persons, indeed, were of the greatest merit, possessing good sense, good humour, honest hearts, honest manners, and eminence in a lovely art; that the lady had, moreover, qualities and accomplishments belonging to her sex, which might form a chapter apart for her, such as music, modesty, beauty, and that softness of disposition, which is the ornament of her sex and charm of ours; but that all these considerations would increase the pang of separation, that their stay here was to be short. *Heart.* But they have told me they would come "In the summer," said the gentleman; but "in the spring," said the lady; and I should love her for ever, were it only for that!'

All the dialogue is in this style, and fills twelve large

* Jefferson's Works, vol. i. p. 394; Letter to Madame Trist, 1785.

† Ibid. vol. i. p. 145; Letter to Bellini, Sept. 30, 1785.



pages. After excusing himself for his excessive prolixity, and promising to be more brief, the author adds:—

'But that you may not be discouraged from a correspondence which begins so formidably, I will promise you, on my honour, that my future letters shall be of a reasonable length. But on your part, no curtailing. If your letters are as long as the Bible, they will appear short to me—only let them be brimful of affection. I shall read them with the dispositions with which Arlequin, in *Les deux Billets*, spelt the words 'je t'aime,' and wished that the whole alphabet had entered into their composition.' *

The pleasantry here is not precisely in the best taste, which may perhaps explain why the correspondence did not continue. Jefferson's declarations of love to the Maison Carrée were of a less compromising character, and of a freer gaiety:—

'Here I am, Madam,' he wrote from Nismes to the Countess de Tessé, 'gazing whole hours at the Maison Carrée, like a lover at his mistress. The stocking weavers and silk spinners around it consider me a hypochondriac Englishman, about to write with a pistol the last chapter of his history. This is the second time I have been in love since I left Paris. The first was with a Diana at the Château de Laye-Epinaye in Beaujolais, a delicious morsel of sculpture, by M. A. Slodtz. This, you will say, was in rule, to fall in love with a female beauty; but with a house! it is out of all precedent. No, Madam, it is not without a precedent in my own history. While in Paris I was violently smitten with the Hotel de Salm, and used to go to the Tuileries almost daily to look at it. The *loueuse des chaises*, inattentive to my passion, never had the complaisance to place a chair there, so that, sitting on the parapet and twisting my neck

* Jefferson's Works, vol. ii. pp. 31—43 ; Letter to Mrs. Cosway. [This was no doubt the accomplished wife of the celebrated English miniature painter.]



round to see the object of my admiration, I generally left it with a *torti-colli*.'*

Nothing so much increases the violence of passion as opposition, or the keen enjoyment of pleasure as having a long while to wait for it. 'The genius of art would seem to have laid his curse on my country.' So said Jefferson; hence the secret of his enthusiasm, and of the delight he took in the works of European art.

It was not only when the fine arts were in question that Jefferson affected these airs of an amateur and connoisseur. He took an interest in everything; knew everything, talked of everything in the rattling style of a pretty female philosopher of the eighteenth century. He criticised the chemical terminology of Lavoisier and an opera in the same tone; fell foul of Newton's physics with the same dogmatism that he attacked monarchy; both were in his eyes nothing better than superannuated errors, that would dissipate in the light of knowledge. To reject with superb scepticism old opinions, to hail with boundless enthusiasm new ones, to doubt of whatever men had always believed, and never to disbelieve in himself or his age, these were the distinguishing features of his criticism. Thus, he as religiously believed in the existence of certain Mammoths which some mystifying traveller pretended to have met with in the mountains of the New World, as he did in the ferocity of the political 'Mammoths' of Europe; and he accepted it as a thing demonstrated, that the Red-skins were descended from the Carthaginians, and that the geological strata were the result

* Jefferson's Works, vol. ii. p. 131.

† Ibid. vol. i. p. 445; Sept. 30, 1785.



of a vegetation analogous to that which developes the ligneous layers in trees.*

To judge by the advice which he gave to his nephew, Peter Carr, a young collegian in search of a religion, we might be tempted to suppose that the clever diplomatist brought to the consideration of religious subjects a little more reserve, prudence, earnestness, and examination, than was usual with him in scientific enquiries: —'In the first place, divest yourself of all bias in favour of novelty and singularity of opinion. Indulge them in any other subject rather than that of religion.' But if we go on reading the letter, we shall find that these are the mere rhetorical warnings of a careless freethinker, who desires neither to alarm his pupil, nor yet to be responsible for the false steps he may take in the course on which he is about to enter: —

'On the other hand,' he adds, 'shake off all the fears and servile prejudices, under which weak minds are servilely crouched. Fix reason firmly in her seat, and call to her tribunal every fact, every opinion. . . . Do not be frightened from this inquiry by any fear of its consequences. If it ends in a belief that there is no God, you will find incitements to virtue in the comfort and pleasantness you feel in its exercise, and the love of others which it will procure you. If you find reason to believe there is a God, a consciousness that you are acting under His eye, and that He approves you, will be a vast additional incitement; if that there be a future state, the hope of a happy existence in that increases the appetite to deserve it; if that Jesus was also a God, you will be comforted by a belief of His aid and love. In fine, I repeat, you must lay aside all prejudice on both sides, and neither believe nor reject anything because any other persons, or description of persons, have rejected or believed it. Your own reason is the only oracle given you by heaven, and you

* Tucker's Life of Jefferson, vol. i. p. 291.



are answerable, not for the rightness, but uprightness of the decision.'*

Little mattered it, therefore, really to Jefferson, whether a man be atheist or deist, spiritualist or materialist, provided merely that he accepts 'his reason as the only oracle given him by heaven,' and considers himself 'answerable not for the rightness, but the uprightness of his decision;'† provided, in fact, that he has created a religion for himself; that is to say, that he has a religion which is none at all, for it is a misconception of the specific character of religion, and a confounding of it with philosophy, to derive it from the genius of man.‡ In

* Jefferson's Works, vol. ii. pp. 239, 240; Aug. 10, 1787.

† Ibid.

‡ [Yet the language of early Protestantism has a singular affinity to that of Jefferson. 'Is it absolutely essential,' asks Pfaffius, a great Protestant authority of his day, speaking of religious differences of opinion, 'to call in a judge to settle controversies? *Let every man be his own judge — in matters respecting his own faith*; provided always that *he be sincere*, that he keep himself free from conceit (*nec sibimet ipsi aduletur*), and that he take all possible pains to qualify himself for the task.' — See his *Dissertatio Posterior de prejudiciis theologicis*, p. 128. The very warning of Pfaffius, *nec sibimet ipsi aduletur*, is as fully given by Jefferson, and even more fully and explicitly. But primitive Christianity is answerable for such sentiments as well as early Protestantism. In his third letter to Philemon (Eusebius Hist. Ecc. lvii., c. vii.), Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, A.D. 247, says he was confirmed in his opinions by a vision from heaven which commanded him thus: '*Read whatever comes to your hands*, for you are able to examine and try all things. *And this was the first occasion of your embracing the faith.*' Memorable language this. The good bishop goes on to say — for he would not even believe a vision from heaven until he tested it — that he accepted the command because it was in conformity with 'the Apostolic precept "*Be skilful money-changers!*"' This precept, not found in the Gospels, was attributed by Clemens Alexandrinus, Origen, and others to Christ; some attributed it to Paul. There has



the same way, as he thought, that, left to itself, human intelligence could discover truth, the whole truth, and that it should follow no other guide, accept no other rule, submit itself to no other authority, so did he think that human liberty necessarily tends to good, and that society, as well as thought, should endeavour to dispense with laws and government. Hence the confusion and inconsistency in his social ideas were as great as in his religious. Man, according to him, is inclined to good; but governments, which are composed of men, he thought naturally inclined to evil. The faults of the governed were, in his estimation, mere aberrations of mind, almost always sure to correct themselves; but the abuses of the governing arose from perversity of feeling, which perpetually required to be kept under by the dread of popular insurrections. Need we remark the singular misconception there is in all this of the human heart? On attaining to power, man does not change his nature; whether submitting to or exercising it, he is the same being, essentially fallible and erring, and we impose restraints upon those who are to govern for the same reason that we do on those who are to be governed. Jefferson's notion was that they should only be imposed on the former, and his aim was to concede to power no other prop than the intelligence of the people enlightened by the press, and to

been much dispute about it. At all events it is an excellent precept, and well illustrates the Bishop's meaning. '*Be skilful money-changers.*' Treat facts and opinions like coins,—examine them, superscription and image, this side and that; weigh them; see that they have a good wholesome ring; and when your reason is satisfied that they have all the marks of genuineness, then put them into your purse as things you may safely receive and honestly distribute.' See Lardner's admirable remarks on the above passage in the 'Credibility,' &c., vol. ii. part ii. pp. 571—573.]



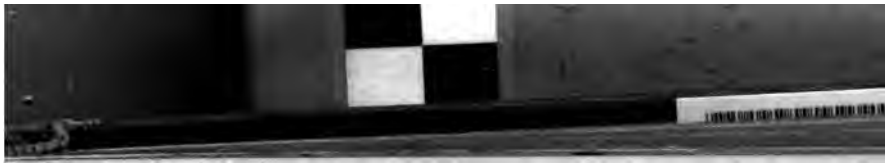
liberty, for its principal safeguard, the suspicious fears of the masses using and abusing the right of insurrection. Thus he did not hesitate to say he would rather be without government than without newspapers, to admire the social state of the Indians, and to regard insurgency as one of the most precious political institutions of his country:—

'The people are the only censors of their governors, and even their errors will tend to keep these to the true principles of their institution. To punish these errors too severely would be to suppress the only safeguard of the public liberty. The way to prevent these irregular interpositions of the people is to give them full information of their affairs through the channel of the public papers, and to contrive that those papers should penetrate the whole mass of the people. The basis of our governments being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right; and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter. But I should mean that every man should receive those papers, and be capable of reading them. I am convinced that those societies (as the Indians) which live without government, enjoy in their general mass an infinitely greater degree of happiness than those who live under the European governments.* . . . I even asked myself if this form of society be not the best of any.† . . . Among the former public opinion is in the place of law, and restrains morals as powerfully as laws ever did anywhere. Among the latter, under pretence of governing, they have divided their nations into two classes,—wolves and sheep.

'I do not exaggerate. This is a true picture of Europe. Cherish, therefore, the spirit of our people, and keep alive their attention. Do not be too severe upon their errors, but reclaim them by enlightening them. If once they become

* Jefferson's Works, vol. ii. p. 99; Letter to Carrington, Jan. 16, 1787.

† Ibid. vol. ii. p. 105; Letter to Madison, Jan. 30, 1787.



inattentive to public affairs, you and I, and congress and assemblies, judges and governors, shall all become wolves.'*

It was in reply to those who, according to him, were too much alarmed and afflicted at the socialist movements which had recently happened in Massachusetts, that Jefferson extemporised these singular doctrines; in his pressing anxiety to represent this formidable outburst of bad passions as a cheering prognostic of the future destinies of his country, he was ready to exclaim with Dr. Pangloss, 'that those who have said that all is good in this world have talked stuff; they should have said that all is for the best.'

'God forbid,' he wrote to his friends, 'we should ever be twenty years without such a rebellion.† . . . I hold it that a little rebellion now and then is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms in the physical. . . . . The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants. . . . Unsuccessful rebellions, indeed, generally establish the encroachments on the rights of the people which have produced them. An observation of this truth should render honest republican governors so mild in their punishment of rebellions as not to discourage them too much.'‡

Such paradoxes are more dangerous to those who stop to read them than to the clever people who recklessly drop them as they write. They did not at all prevent Jefferson's pitilessly treating as 'scamps,' 'scoundrels,' and 'brigands' the workmen in the Faubourg St. Antoine, killed before Réveillon's house for having been too sincere in their belief that 'the tree of liberty required to be refreshed from time to

* Jefferson's Works, vol. ii. p. 99; Letter to Carrington, Jan. 16, 1787.

† Ibid. vol. ii. p. 318; Letter to Colonel Smith, Nov. 13, 1787.

‡ Ibid. p. 105; Jefferson to Madison, Jan. 30, 1787.



time with the blood of patriots and tyrants.' The excesses of these sanguinary bands which had just made their appearance in the streets of Paris aroused in him, indeed, contempt rather than fear. The violent acts of the mob he looked upon merely as inevitable accidents, common to all revolutions, and which proved nothing whatever against the one he was watching in its progress with the friendly curiosity of a sympathising connoisseur. Only what sometimes ruffled the smoothness of his optimist speculations as to the issue of the French Revolution, was the moral and intellectual condition of the people, who, by a sudden emancipation, and without any preparatory training, were about to pass abruptly from an oppressive tutelage into unlimited independence. Then, again, there was their arrogant and almost puerile confidence in their strength, and political knowledge; the precipitancy, at one and the same time impetuous and systematic, of their external demonstrations, their inexperience of liberty, their ignorance of the conditions necessary to its existence, their little instinctive taste for those institutions which are its surest guarantees.

'How far they can proceed, in the end, towards a thorough reformation of abuse, cannot be foreseen;' thus he wrote to Washington, Dec. 4, 1788. 'In my opinion a kind of influence, which none of their plans of reform take into account, will elude them all,—I mean the influence of women in the government. The manners of the nation allow them to visit, alone, all persons in office, to solicit the affairs of the husband, family, or friends, and their solicitations bid defiance to laws and regulations.'

And to Madison he said:—

'The misfortune is, that they are not yet* ripe for receiving

* Jefferson's Works, vol. ii. p. 536.



the blessings to which they are entitled. I doubt, for instance, whether the body of the nation, if they could be consulted, would accept of a habeas corpus law, if offered them by the king.' *

And after the meeting of the Constituent Assembly:—

'They flatter themselves they shall form a better constitution than the English. I think it will be better in some points, worse in others. It will be better in the article of representation, which will be more equal. It will be worse, as their situation obliges them to keep up the dangerous machine of a standing army. I doubt, too, whether they will attain the trial by jury, because they are not sensible of its value † . . . and I consider that as the only anchor ever yet imagined by man, by which a government can be held to the principles of its constitution.‡ . . . Never was there a country where the practice of governing too much had taken deeper root and done more mischief. § . . . In short, ours has been professedly their model, in which such changes are made as a difference of circumstances rendered necessary, and some others neither necessary nor advantageous, but into which men will ever run, when versed in theory and new in the practice of government, when acquainted with man only as they see him in their books, and not in the world.‖ . . . I fear more from the number of the Assembly than from any other cause. Twelve hundred persons are difficult to keep to order, and will be so, especially till they shall have had time to frame rules of order.¶ . . .

'It is to be feared, that an impatience to rectify everything at once, which prevails in some minds, may terrify the court and lead them to appeal to force, and to depend on that alone.' **

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* Jefferson's Works, vol. ii. p. 506; Nov. 18, 1788.

† Ibid. vol. ii. p. 557; Letter to Dr. Price, Jan. 8, 1789.

‡ Ibid. vol. iii. p. 71; Letter to T. Paine.

§ Ibid. vol. iii. p. 97; Letter to Madison, Aug. 28, 1789.

‖ Ibid. vol. iii. p. 98.

¶ Ibid. vol. iii. p. 8; Letter to Paine, March 17, 1789.

** Ibid. vol. ii. p. 510; Letter to J. Jay, Nov. 19, 1788.



Jefferson himself was not aware to what an extent these passing anxieties were well founded. In the midst of the rather confused and somewhat contradictory impressions he was daily receiving from the events happening under his own eyes, what was uppermost in him was a confidence — an enthusiastic confidence — which was hourly growing stronger in proportion as the revolutionary surge rose higher, sweeping away with it both actors and spectators. 'There is a charm,' says Pascal, 'in being in a ship lashed by the tempest, when we know that it is perfectly safe.' Never did anyone enjoy this pleasure more thoroughly than Jefferson; and when he was obliged to tear himself away, he left the ship with the intimate conviction that the storm was driving it into harbour. 'The French revolution will be over in a year,' was his remark when embarking, much against his inclination, for New York, in Oct. 8, 1789.

The French Revolution was still going on when, in 1821, adverting to the events of which he was a spectator, he reproached those who had undertaken to direct it with not having followed his advice at the outset of the crisis (the beginning of June 1789), when the States-General had as yet done nothing, and compromised nothing, but were already on the point of plunging into those perilous paths in which they subsequently lost their way. A month had elapsed since the opening of that assembly, and it had not yet succeeded in agreeing on its mode of proceeding. The dispute which had arisen between the three orders, on the question of verification of powers, was every day increasing in violence. The Commons, or third estate irritated at the resistance of the noblesse, and knowing as yet, in their political inexperience, no better way of



getting rid of an obstruction than by violently removing it, began to entertain the project of forcibly suppressing every kind of distinction between the orders,—a revolutionary project 'denoting,' says Jefferson, 'more courage than calculation.' No less unwise, the Court, in its barren perplexity, could devise nothing better than extreme measures. Everything announced a rupture between these different powers, which, for so long a period, had lost the habit of conducting the business of the country in common. To prevent their mutual destruction, the proper course would have been to terminate at any price a state of violence which, if prolonged, was likely to compromise the principle so recently revived of the intervention of the country in its own affairs. To put an immediate end to the discussion—to adjourn to a moment of greater calm the consideration and framing of a formal constitution—to confine themselves for the moment to the unconditional acceptance of a royal charter, briefly guaranteeing the nation's rights—then, after its receiving the signatures of the king and the representatives of the three orders, immediately to dissolve themselves,—such was the course which Jefferson suggested: but let him speak for himself:—

'I was quite alarmed at this state of things. The soldiery had not yet indicated which side they should take, and that which they should support would be likely to prevail. I considered a successful reformation of government in France as insuring a general reformation through Europe, and the resurrection to a new life of their people, now ground to dust by the abuses of the governing powers. I was much acquainted with the leading patriots of the assembly. Being from a country which had successfully passed through a similar reformation, they were disposed to my acquaintance, and had some confidence in me. I urged, most strenuously, an



immediate compromise; to secure what the government was now ready to yield, and trust to future occasions for what might still be wanting. It was well understood that the King would grant, at this time, 1. Freedom of the person by habeas corpus; 2. Freedom of conscience; 3. Freedom of the press; 4. Trial by jury; 5. A representative legislature; 6. Annual meetings; 7. The organization of laws; 8. The exclusive right of taxation and appropriation; and 9. The responsibility of ministers: and with the exercise of these powers they could obtain in future whatever might be further necessary to improve and preserve the constitution. They thought otherwise, however, and events have proved their lamentable error. For after thirty years of war, foreign and domestic,—the loss of millions of lives,—the prostration of private happiness,—and the foreign subjugation of their own country for a time, they have obtained no more, nor even that securely.*

Jefferson, perhaps, had no right to criticise the conduct of his French friends with such severity, for he had shared in their intoxication, and even while censuring their mistakes had, under the influence of the disarray into which the French revolution had thrown his ideas, indulged himself in chimeras still more absurd than theirs. The same man who had so calmly and sensibly pointed out the proper groundwork on which the French constitution should have been founded, had started the question, Would it not be justifiable and useful to insert in it the right of proclaiming a national bankruptcy every nineteen years? and at the very moment when he was speaking with more than disdain of 'those politicians versed in the theory, and novices in the practice of government, who knew man such as they saw him in their books, and not such as he is in the world,'—he suffered himself to be bewildered by the false lights of these

* 1821. Jefferson's Works, vol. i. p. 93; *Autobiography.*



very books, and to be carried away by the boldness of theories, 'which would be,' he said, 'deemed bold in England, and are reasonable beyond the reach of an Englishman, who, slumbering under a kind of half reformation in politics and religion, is not excited by anything he sees or feels to question the remains of prejudice. . . A Frenchman sees nothing but absurdities wherever he looks, whether it be towards the throne or the altar. The writers of this country, now taking the field freely, and unrestrained, or rather uninvolved, by prejudice, will rouse us from all the errors in which we have been hitherto rocked.*'

The principle that a people should always remain faithful to its engagements was one of those prejudices which Jefferson had imbibed in his cradle, but from which he had recovered during his residence in Paris. He took to himself the credit of having effected his own emancipation, without anybody's aid. Weary of following in the track of other revolutionary leaders, he was ambitious in his turn of opening the way to new discoveries in political science, of suggesting new means of progress to the human mind; and he therefore felt it his duty to enquire if one generation of men had the right to bind another.

'It seems never to have been started either on this or our side of the water,' he wrote to Madison, Sept. 6, 1789. 'Yet it is a question of such consequences as not only to merit decision, but place also among the fundamental principles of every government. The course of reflection in which we are immersed here, on the elementary principles of society, has presented this question to my mind; and that no such obligation can be transmitted, I think very capable of proof.'†

He then proceeded to develope his idea at length: here it is, I believe, in all its naked exactness: —

* Jefferson's Works, vol. iii. pp. 8—11. † Ibid. vol. iii. p. 103.



We cannot transmit a right or an obligation which we have not. We cannot have a right or an obligation when we are not. The dead no longer are. They are then not anything. They cannot then owe anything. They cannot then bequeath anything. The material part of what they possessed within the world's domain alone survives them, and natural right gives it to the first comer, but without reviving the burdens upon it with which they may have saddled it, and which demise with them. The earth is the patrimony, not of the dead, but of the living. The dead cannot bind the living. This principle of the natural law may be justifiably modified by the civil laws; the latter may, in the common interest, revive obligations and rights extinguished by death, and out of the entirety of these rights and obligations form a moral person styled an estate; it may give to this estate heirs and creditors, and while attaching to it certain advantages in favour of the former, may impose upon it certain conditions for the benefit of the latter. Society may do what it will with its members, but public law cannot imitate civil law. Civil law applies exclusively to individuals in subjection to society; public law applies solely to society taken as a whole, which is dependent only on itself. A generation,—that is to say, an entire society which takes the place of a previous one, — naturally enters into the possession of the property left by its predecessors, but without succeeding to the burdens with which they may have saddled it, and which have expired with them. This generation, this new society, is subject to no superior authority capable of creating a political estate. No one can make it responsible for debts which it has not contracted, for engagements which it has never taken, for laws which it has never



made, and from which natural law discharges it. One generation, therefore, cannot bind another, and every law of which the duration exceeds that which made it is contrary to right. The term of a generation may be calculated by the laws of mortality. According to Buffon's Tables of Mortality we find that, at the expiration of nineteen years, the majority of men who have reached the age of reason and are capable of binding themselves gives place to a new majority. At the end of nineteen years every constitution, every law, every national contract, is therefore void. Every nineteen years bankruptcy, revolution, and the remodelling of society are necessary and warrantable.*

Jefferson knew too well what he was about to make himself responsible in public estimation for a theory so revolting to common sense. Accordingly he was anxious that all the honour of fathering it should fall to Madison.† 'Turn this subject in your mind, my dear sir, and particularly as to the power of contracting debts, and develope it with that cogent logic which is so peculiarly yours. Your station in the councils of our country gives you an opportunity of producing it to public consideration—of forcing it into discussion. At first blush it may be laughed at as the dream of a theorist; but examination will prove it to be solid and salutary.'‡ 'At first blush' Madison did not find it 'in all points compatible with the course of human affairs.'§

* Jefferson's Works, p. 103; vol. vi. pp. 138, 196; vol. vii. pp. 16, 19, 311, 359.

† [How this recalls that early trait of his boyhood—the practice of doing through his schoolfellows what he wanted the boldness to do through himself! How the 'child is father of the man!']

‡ Jefferson's Works, vol. iii. p. 107; September 6, 1789.

§ Tucker's 'Life of Jefferson,' vol. i. p. 326; Madison to Jefferson, February 4, 1790.



Without venturing to contest the principle of Jefferson's doctrine, without perhaps seeing himself very clearly in what his friend's fundamental idea was false, he suggested to him a few practical objections, and, with a singular mixture of deference and delicate irony, he declined the honour of developing a theory above the comprehension of his fellow-countrymen. Jefferson in all probability approved his friend's prudent reserve; for as long as he remained actively mixed up with public life he thought no more about his theory, or at all events said nothing about it; but he had a tenacity of mind which was equal, at least, to the facility with which he could put aside such of his ideas as threatened to embarrass or compromise him. After wilfully neglecting, for the space of four and twenty years, all the opportunities which his official position afforded him of realising his idea, it returned upon him with fresh force in his retreat at Monticello, and on June 24, 1813, he could write to his son-in-law, Mr. Epps, one of the Virginian representatives to Congress, and chairman of the committee of ways and means, as follows:—

'This letter will be on politics only; for although I do not often permit myself to think on that subject, it sometimes obtrudes itself, and suggests ideas which I am tempted to pursue. Some of these relating to the business of finance I will hazard to you, as being at the head of that committee, but intended for yourself individually, or such as you trust; but certainly not for a mixed committee.' *

And he then reverted to his notion that one generation has no right to bind another, and that every loan contracted for a period of more than nineteen years is an abuse of power.

* Jefferson's Works, vol. vi. p. 136.



When we are so much afraid to avow what we have said, it is because we have some distrust of the value of what we think. In point of fact, the mystery in which Jefferson wrapt his doctrine would of itself suffice to condemn it; but we have learned to our cost that it is as necessary to refute, as it is proper to despise, such sophisms. I do not pretend to have obtained an exact list of all the detestable paradoxes which were revived under our eyes in 1848. It is my impression, however, that, amid the collection of the copies of our great masters which the socialists, our contemporaries, desired to pass off upon us for originals, they forgot to place this conceit of Jefferson's. This is a piece of forgetfulness which no doubt they will repair at some other opportunity, and all the more readily, seeing that the error of the illustrious American democrat proceeds exactly from the same principle, as do those errors of which they have made themselves the expounders. This is so true, that I find in M. Guizot's 'Democracy in France' a passage written in reply to M. Proudhon, which is, at the same time, a reply to Jefferson.

'Man,—this not only includes the individual beings whom we call men: it means the human race, which has an associated life, and a general and progressive destiny; a distinctive characteristic of the human creature, alone in the midst of creation.

'On what depends this characteristic? On this,—that human individuals are not isolated nor limited to themselves, nor to the point they occupy in space and time. They hold on the one to the other; they act the one on the other by ties and means which do not require their personal presence, and which survive them, so that successive generations of men are inter-connected with each other and linked together by the act of succession.

'The permanent unity which is thus established, and the



progressive developement thus effected by this incessant tradition handed down from men to men, and from generations to generations,—these it is which constitute the human race; which determine its originality and grandeur; which represent one of the traits which mark out man for sovereignty in this world, and for immortality in the world beyond it.

'From this it is that are derived, and through this that are founded, the family and the state, property and inheritance, country, history, glory, all the facts and all the sentiments which constitute the far-stretching and perpetual life of humanity in the midst of the apparition so brief, and of the dispersion so rapid, of human individuals.'*

Jefferson's theory surpasses all this: it abolishes the human race. Had he given himself the trouble to consider the ultimate tendency of his views, he would probably have hesitated to accept it; but he was one of those active and easy-going intelligences which permit themselves to be dazzled by their own notions, and which apply the principle of free enquiry to the doctrines of their adversaries only.

In almost all careers there are certain determining epochs when opinions pause and feelings become fixed. Such to Jefferson was the period of the French Revolution. No American statesman was more deeply

* [It is much to be regretted, when French writers use the term 'Socialist,' they do not qualify it by some epithet that would impart somewhat of precision to it. It would be impossible to gather from the text, or most distantly to surmise from it, that the most determined adversary of M. Proudhon's theory was M. Louis Blanc, the most distinguished of all the Socialist leaders. Puzzled by this term as I heard it applied in France, I once asked M. Emile de Girardin, who was then called a Socialist, what its exact value might be. 'A very fit question,' he replied, 'and, in fact, I am now writing a reply to it, which I will do myself the pleasure of sending you when it appears.' I have not been so fortunate as to receive this reply, nor have I heard of its being published.]



penetrated by its influence. He carried away with him from Paris the greater portion of the ideas which were about to play a part in his conduct in America—ideas as yet disinterested, and which he did not until a later period think of turning to a political account. How he was induced to take them for a weapon and a flag, and to group a faction about them—how his heart changed and soured in the struggle,—this is what we shall attempt to show by relating the origin, organization, and triumph of the democratic party in the United States.



CHAPTER VII.

1790—1794.

JEFFERSON SECRETARY OF STATE TO WASHINGTON — FORTUNATE REVOLUTION WHICH HAD OCCURRED IN THE UNITED STATES DURING HIS ABSENCE — HE CONTINUED IN HARMONY WITH THE SOCIAL TENDENCIES OF HIS FELLOW-COUNTRYMEN — HAMILTON, SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY, AND HIS FINANCIAL PLANS — MADISON OPPOSES THEM IN CONGRESS — JEFFERSON ACCOMMODATES THE DISPUTE BETWEEN HAMILTON AND THE OPPOSITION — HE REPRESENTS THE OPPOSITION IN THE CABINET — ORGANISES THE REPUBLICAN PARTY — SECRET RIVALRY BETWEEN JEFFERSON AND HAMILTON — JEFFERSON IS TEMPTED TO RETIRE — HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH WASHINGTON ON THEIR COMMON DESIRE OF QUITTING PUBLIC LIFE — OPEN RUPTURE BETWEEN JEFFERSON AND HAMILTON — BREAKING OUT OF THE WAR BETWEEN FRANCE AND EUROPE — ANTIPATHY OF HAMILTON AND THE FEDERALISTS TO REVOLUTIONARY FRANCE — SYMPATHY OF JEFFERSON AND THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY WITH THE CAUSE OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION — GENET'S MISSION TO AMERICA — AWKWARD POSITION IN WHICH JEFFERSON IS PLACED BY GENET'S VIOLENCE AND FOLLY — SKILL AND BOLDNESS WITH WHICH HE GETS OUT OF IT — HE QUITS PUBLIC LIFE FOR A LITTLE WHILE.

FOR a man of talent and good company, who has a taste for politics without being much enamoured of responsibility and strife, and who aspires to honours, without being tempted by the ambition to be what Sir Robert Peel finely calls 'a daring pilot in the midst of



the tempest,' there is not a more agreeable occupation than the somewhat idle employment of diplomatic life. To have the mind fixed on the most important questions, to be mixed up with affairs of the highest import, yet to be but rarely called upon to come to a decision respecting them; to have as one's principal duty to observe and to please; never to have to act, for the most part, save in virtue of instructions which are a warranty; never to have to answer but for one's self; never to be criticised but by connoisseurs; never to depend upon the public; to be able to serve one's country, with the privilege of keeping aloof from the internal quarrels which distract it,—this is of all political situations the most pleasing and the least compromising. Jefferson was very much alive to the pleasures and advantages of the diplomatic career. 'The attaching circumstance of my present office is, that I can do its duties unseen by those for whom they are done;' it was thus he wrote while minister from the United States to Paris.* And he vowed never to leave this twilight in which he liked to live. He was, therefore, almost as much annoyed as flattered to learn, on landing at Norfolk, November 20, 1789, that the President had summoned him to fill the first place in his Cabinet.† The post of Secretary

* Jefferson's Works, vol. ii. p. 587. Letter to F. Hopkinson, March 13, 1789.

† After Washington's election to the Presidency, Congress had created three ministerial departments — the Secretaryship of State, embracing foreign affairs, the seals and archives; the War Department, army and navy; and the Treasury Department. The holders of these three departments, appointed and removable at will by the President, were, together with the Attorney-General, to form his Cabinet. Previous to Jefferson's arrival General Knox had been appointed Secretary-at-War, Colonel Hamilton Secretary of the Treasury, and Mr. Edmund Randolph Attorney-General of the Supreme Court.



of State, offered him by Washington, embraced within its sphere the whole management of foreign affairs, and partly of internal affairs. It was a heavy burden, but one which could not be refused without loss of consequence. Jefferson, moreover, was as much afraid of exposing himself to the displeasure of the all-powerful head of the nation, as to face the sharp criticisms of the public. After timidly confessing to Washington his dislike of the responsibility, and his wish to be sent back to Paris, he was a sufficiently good courtier to do, when required, violence to his tastes. 'If,' he writes, 'it should be your wish for me to remain at New York, my chief comfort will be to work under your eye, my only shelter the authority of your name, and the wisdom of measures to be dictated by you, and implicitly executed by me.'* Washington pressed the matter, leaving him, however, a liberal discretion to act; but Jefferson accepted without difficulty. He was neither a sufficiently disinterested patriot, nor a sufficiently impatient aspirer, to hanker after posts of difficulty; but, when he found them thrown in his way, he had too much confidence in his good fortune, and knowledge of life, to suffer himself to be long disquieted by any useless apprehensions.

Had he been even less of an optimist than he was, his cares would soon have been dissipated. He reached America at one of those moments which follow happy revolutions,†—when the people feel satisfied with

* Jefferson's Works, vol. iii. p. 125. Letter to Washington, Dec. 15, 1789.

† During Jefferson's residence in Europe, a happy revolution had occurred in America. When he quitted his country in 1784, the independence of the United States had already been achieved; but the government of the Union was not yet founded; Washington and his friends had not yet accomplished more than the first half of their



themselves and those who govern them, and when the public good humour, so to speak, is contagious. Emancipated from the obstacles which the impotence of Congress had for a long while opposed to their upward flight, disencumbered of the federal compact which divided them into thirteen different republics, the United States, now become one nation, entered, full of youth, health, and vigour, into a new career. The constitution just framed was in vigorous action; Washington and his friends, elevated to power by the revolution they had originated, gave a government to the Union. In the country where the English press saw nothing but corruption and premature decay, contempt of law, unprofitable agitation, ruin, fraud, and violence, the head of the state was watching faithfully over the execution of treaties, the courts of law were enforcing

task. The federal compact, known under the name of *Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union*, which preceded the actual constitution of the United States, seemed to have been concluded for no other purpose than that of organizing an impotent congress; the only bond between the states, the only central power, but a power without means of action, without any right of coercion, and which, in order to enforce its decrees, required the full assent of thirteen little sovereign and rival republics. It was to rescue the United States from the divisions and anarchy into which they had fallen in consequence of the weakness of the federal bond, and to combine the thirteen states under one national form, that the Convention of Philadelphia met on May 14, 1787. Under the direction of Washington, Franklin, Hamilton, Madison, Gouverneur Morris, it framed that constitution of the United States which we are never weary of admiring, when we compare it with the disorder out of which it issued. This new form of government came into operation on March 4, 1789, and Washington, elected to the Presidency by the unanimous vote of his fellow-citizens, undertook the duty of setting the political machine going which the Convention of Philadelphia had constructed. It is this great reform in the government of the United States which has sometimes been called in America the *Revolution of* 1789.



the observance of private contracts, Congress was providing for the payment of the public debt, the local authorities were everywhere preserving order, the citizens were growing rich, justice, security, prosperity were reviving, bad passions slumbering, and Washington, when passing through the states recently the scene of Socialist disturbances, had been the object of an enthusiasm so akin to idolatry, that a peevish spectator exclaimed, 'We have been passing through a series of papistical adorations; the President returns to New York perfumed all over with incense.'* To demonstrate that all was for the best in the New World, it was no longer requisite to apologise for insurrection and bankruptcy. Jefferson had too much good sense to be unhappy at such a change; but what he saw bore so little resemblance to the America he had left, that he felt the need of again recovering the tone of feeling belonging to one's own country which is lost, in some degree, after a certain absence; 'I only know,' he said, 'the Americans of 1784 — a very different thing from knowing those of 1789.'†

From the very fact of his not having gone through all the phases of expression through which public opinion had passed, Jefferson was in all probability not the less in harmony with the social tendencies of his fellow-countrymen. Institutions and the state of things had changed, but manners were the same. It was out of a reaction against the spirit of democratic excess and local selfishness that the constitution of the United States issued; but this great movement of opinion, the

* Hildreth's History of the United States, 2nd series, vol. i. p. 149.

† Jefferson's Works, vol. ii. 538; vol. iv. p. 513.



results of which have been so permanent,* was destined to be itself ephemeral, as is the case with all reactions. After thus reining itself in with a check that steadied its pace and controlled its restiveness, the American nation could yield to its natural tendency with increased confidence. Jefferson had never believed in the danger of this tendency; he had never ceased to have confidence in the uncontrolled developement of the national passions and energy, and to attribute to a propitious exuberance of life the democratic excesses which had opened the eyes of the founders of the constitution to the perils from which American society had need to be protected—perils so great as to extort from Madison the declaration,† 'If the lessons which it inculcates should not work the proper impressions on the American public, it will be a proof that our case is desperate.' Jefferson had seen only from a distance the internal disorder to which his friend was alluding—a disorder so great that, says Washington, 'it is nearly impossible for anyone, who has not been on the spot, to conceive what the delicacy and danger of our situation have been.‡ . . . We have probably had too good an opinion of human nature in forming our confederation. Experience has taught us, that men will not adopt and carry into execution measures the best calculated for their own good without the intervention of a coercive power.' §

This too favourable an opinion of human nature, which experience had banished from the minds of the

* [Alas! this is now an anachronism.]

† Writings of Washington, vol. ix. p. 208. Letter from Madison to Washington, Nov. 8, 1786.

‡ Ibid. vol. ix. p. 427. Letter to Jefferson, Aug. 31, 1788.

§ Ibid. vol. ix. p. 187. Letter to Jay.



founders of independence, was the keystone of Jefferson's political faith, and that which rendered him, more entirely and exactly than any other of his fellow-statesmen, the representative of the democratic school of his country. But his future second-in-command, Madison, and his future adversaries, Washington, Hamilton, Jay, and John Adams, were under the dominion of the idea that the object of governments is to govern; and if this be a weakness, they all equally deserved to be included in that great family of hypochondriacs which Jefferson at a later period represented as the hot-bed of aristocrats:—

'Men, by their constitutions, are naturally divided into two parties: 1. Those who fear and distrust the people, and wish to draw all powers from them into the hands of the higher classes. 2. Those who identify themselves with the people, have confidence in them, cherish and consider them as the most honest and safe, although not the most wise, depository of the public interests. In every country these two parties exist, and in every one where they are free to think, speak, and write, they will declare themselves. Call them, therefore, liberals and serviles, Jacobins and ultras, whigs and tories, republicans and federalists, aristocrats and democrats, or by whatever name you please, they are the same parties still, and pursue the same object. The last appellation of aristocrats and democrats is the true one, expressing the essence of all.'*

Jefferson was one of those sincere flatterers of humanity who fancy themselves daring, because they are full of complacency for the daring of the multitude, and who style themselves the only friends of the people, because they are the natural enemies of the

* Jefferson's Works, vol. vii. p. 376. Letter to W. Lee, Aug. 10, 1824.



large-hearted men who resist its excesses. He was a democrat by temperament, and herein was his superiority over other of his friends who were about to become democrats from ambition or feebleness. He had no effort to make, no principle to abandon, in order to identify himself with the masses; in his natural tendencies he found a prodigal source of fellowship with them. By his opinions on the distribution of powers between the federal and state governments, as well as by his confidence in the natural integrity of the people, he was in harmony with the passions and favourite prejudices of his fellow-countrymen. No man knew better than he did, how much their state of political isolation, their aversion to every description of authority which operated at a distance from their eyes and control, their distrust of Congress, had impaired the action and attenuated the renown of the United States; and yet, even at the very moment when his diplomatic experience had brought distinctly home to him the necessity of confining the spirit of local independence within more powerful barriers than the *Articles of Confederation*, he actually proposed to take away from the government, whose office it was to watch over the general interests of the country, all power over its internal administration. In the sketches of a constitution which he sent from Paris in 1787, to the members of the Philadelphian Convention, he particularly insisted on this point. He says:—.

'My general plan would be to make the states one as to everything connected with foreign nations, and several as to everything purely domestic.'*

* Jefferson's Works, vol. ii. p. 217. Letter to E. Carrington, Aug. 4, 1787.



A grand and simple conception, in perfect conformity with the political genius of the Americans, and which, by the force of things, would more and more tend to prevail, in proportion as the United States, by their diffusion through the New World, should embrace an ever-increasing number, and variety of nations and races, but which, in 1787, had the great defect of being premature, and of sacrificing actual wants to remote contingencies. The constitution was framed in an entirely different spirit. It was, so says the preamble, 'to form a more perfect union, *establish justice*, ensure *domestic tranquillity*, provide for the common defence, *promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty* to ourselves and to our posterity,' that the citizens of the United States adopted it. Jefferson, nevertheless, approved it as a whole, his objections referring to two points only—the indefinite re-election of the President, and the absence of any declaration of rights. With these exceptions, 'it was, in his eyes, the wisest which had ever been offered to mankind,'* the greatest title to glory of the illustrious legislators of Philadelphia. He had been so little struck with the fundamental difference between his plan and their work that, towards the close of his career, he still affected to discover its principle in the ground-work of the constitution, to represent it as the key to the right construction of doubtful passages, and to appeal to it as evidence against the right of the federal government to make canals and highways. 'The best general key for the solution of questions of power between our governments, is the fact that every foreign

* Jefferson's Works, vol. iii. p. 12. Letter to Colonel Humphries, March 18, 1789.



and federal power is given to the federal government, and to the states every power purely domestic* . . . . The federal is, in truth, our foreign government, which department alone is taken from the sovereignty of the separate states.'

But what, in 1824, had become the intolerant symbol of an old party leader, was, in 1789, nothing more than the indulgent theory of an amiable philosopher, asking from others merely the liberty of thinking according to his own fancy, and of not enrolling himself under any banner:—

'I am not a federalist,' he wrote at that time, 'because I never submitted the whole system of my opinions to the creed of any party of men whatever, in religion, in philosophy, in politics, or in anything else where I was capable of thinking for myself. Such an addiction is the last degradation of a free and moral agent. If I could not go to heaven but with a party, I would not go there at all.'†

The over-refining of a mere looker-on, which Jefferson was very soon to forget as an actor! He had claimed for himself, rather too hastily, the merit of a virtue which hitherto had not been very seriously tested. The great parties which were about to contend with each other for the government of the union were not yet developed. As long as the political activity of the country was without a centre, their elements had continued as dispersed and diffused as were the governing powers; while there were only local governments, there were only local parties. The vote on the draft of the constitution submitted to the approval of the people of the United States by the Philadelphian Convention, was

* Jefferson's Works, vol. vii. p. 336. Letter to Garnett, Feb. 4, 1824.
† Ibid. vol. ii. p. 585. Letter to F. Hopkinson, March 13, 1789.



the first thing since the triumph of the cause of independence which had divided the whole nation into two opposite camps. Those who were in favour of its ratification took the name of *Federalists*, and gave their opponents the name of *Anti-Federalists*. A violent controversy sprang up between the two parties, but immediately the constitution was adopted, they broke up and disappeared. Brought into existence merely for the purpose of a special issue, they had not yet received the strong organization of those permanent forces which are alone capable of surviving either victory or defeat. Their struggle had left powerful traces upon men's minds, but without definitively grouping them. If the majority of the anti-federalists appeared inclined to engage in a systematic opposition to the government, which the constitution had created, many of them gave it their loyal support. If the majority of those who were federalists previous to the contest had determined to fortify and strengthen the federal power, several, including some of the most influential, were making up their minds to swell the ranks of their former adversaries. It was just at the moment when this work of reconstruction and reorganization of parties was beginning, that Jefferson took his place in the Cabinet at New York.*

For more than a month the financial measures of Colonel Hamilton, the Secretary of the Treasury, had been the subject of violent discussion in Congress. Jefferson's reappearance, therefore, was all the more welcome to the political world of New York; everyone was desirous of enlisting the new comer on his side. The dispute being unconnected with his own

* March 21, 1790.



department, he had no advice to give respecting the points at issue; he accepted without distinction the complimentary addresses of all his friends, coquetting a little, but for no selfish purpose, perhaps even with the intention of being useful to his colleague of the treasury. He was too little acquainted with the exact state of things, and too well satisfied with the warm reception with which all the members of the Cabinet had greeted him, to be in a humour, or indeed in a position, to be sensible of the natural antagonism between his principles and those of Hamilton.

Appointed at twenty years of age an officer on Washington's staff, Hamilton* had been formed in the midst of camps, under the tent of the commander-in-chief, in those upper regions of the military profession, in which the mind, if it be of any greatness, becomes accustomed to contemplate events from an elevated point of view and in their entire compass, to seize the connecting link between social organisation and the fruits of war, to combine the movements of armies with the action of political powers. His profession as a soldier had made him a politician, and a passion for good government was generated in him by his eagerness for victory. Observing military operations incessantly obstructed by the collision of the various state authorities, and the administrative disorder inherent in the federal system, he had frequently glanced with envy at the strong unity and striking co-ordination of European monarchies, and felt it all the less necessary to be on his guard against the impression they left on his mind, from knowing that local liberties must be imperishable in America. There was no reason to apprehend, as far as they were concerned, that the

* [See Appendix iv. for a brief notice of him.]

1,346.



union between the provinces could ever become too close. While urging on the country in the direction of national unity, it was possible to carry out the policy to its greatest possible extent, without the risk of falling into any excess. The natural tendencies of the people were far more than enough to protect them from the dangers of centralization. Hamilton was satisfied of this, and he therefore devoted himself without hesitation to the support of the central power: —

'There is a wide difference,' he said, during a momentary lull in the operations in the campaign of 1788, 'between our situation and that of an empire under one simple form of government, distributed into counties, provinces, or districts, which have no legislatures, but merely magistratical bodies to execute the laws of a common sovereign. Here the danger is that the sovereign will have too much power, and oppress the parts of which it is composed. In our case, that of an empire composed of confederated states, each with a government completely organized within itself, having all the means to draw its subjects to a close dependence on itself, the danger is directly the reverse. It is that the common sovereign will not have power sufficient to unite the different members together, and direct the common forces to the interest and happiness of the whole.' *

And he at once struck out the scheme of constitutional reform, and the financial system which founded and consolidated the union.

Hamilton's great merit as Secretary of the Treasury is that of having made his financial combinations subserve the great idea which had suggested the constitution. In recommending Congress to take upon its own shoulders and to discharge in full all debts which had been contracted for the common cause, both those of the

* Hamilton's Works, vol. i. p. 152. Letter to James Duane, Sept. 3, 1780.

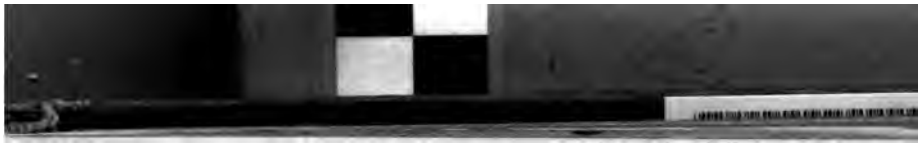


separate states as well as those of the confederation, his object was not only to save the national honour, to revive American credit, and to give the country a lesson of probity by this signal example of respect for public obligations: he had an ulterior purpose, which was to create ties between the provinces themselves by financially uniting them, to strengthen the central government by rallying capitalists around it, and to enrich existing institutions with a new element of duration by making it the interest of all the creditors of the States to maintain them.

It was precisely this political aspect of the scheme which should have commanded Madison's support. No one had assisted more actively than he in assaulting the former federal system, and establishing the new one. No one had so much deserved the hatred of the anti-federalists, and the confidence of Washington. He refused a place in the Cabinet, but there is reason to think he did so in order to assume the position of leader in the house of representatives, from which ministers were excluded. He preferred making himself the advocate of the passions of his Virginian constituents, and thus of re-establishing his popularity, which had been shaken by his fidelity to a sound policy. The Virginian planters were in general greatly in debt. Under the English rule they had contracted crushing obligations in London, and during the revolutionary period had got into the habit of not paying them. Their indebtedness, however, did not for this the less exist, greatly increased, too, by a heavy amount of arrears. To rescue America from financial disorder was to threaten them with ruin. Hence their ill-humour against federal principles—a feeling which some recent discussions on the slave question, and on that of custom-house duties, had still more



embittered, by bringing to light the difference of manners and economical interests which separated them from those northern states with which they were to be, so it was pretended, *united*. The object which Hamilton had in view was hateful to them; the measures by which he proposed to effect it they regarded as utterly unjust. They were agriculturists, rich in land, but poor in capital. Always in need of money, they had been compelled to get rid, at a great sacrifice, of their treasury bonds; it was, therefore, the purchasers of these bonds, unprincipled speculators, so they reasoned, who were going to put into their pockets all that the original creditors had lost, and these speculators belonged almost exclusively to the commercial states of the North; the consolidation of the federal debt would operate to the advantage of the North; the financial union which would be established between the different states would also turn to its profit; for it was the North that had suffered most by the war, it was the North that had the largest amount of debts to transfer to the federal account. The South had quite enough of its own! Such were the sentiments of the Southern people. Madison in vain sought to attenuate them by becoming their echo. But all the courtesy of his language could not conceal the ill-feeling at the bottom of his advocacy. The representatives of New England took fire, and began to threaten. If bankruptcy was to be the order of the day, rather than become responsible for so foul a blot, they would withdraw from Congress; if the financial union was to be rejected, they would scatter to the winds the political union! There was reason to suppose, and Jefferson thought so for an instant, that there was no rhetorical exaggeration in this language. At Hamilton's request, he undertook to mediate between



the contending parties. Their leaders were, in fact, uneasy enough at the extremes to which they had proceeded. While entertaining for each other an inveterate dislike, they saw the necessity of having recourse to one of those compromises in which almost all political quarrels terminate in that country,—where, since the first hour of its existence, there has always been the menace of settling them by an appeal to the sword. By a singular piece of good luck, the financial question was not the only one which separated Congress into two geographical sections. There were at the same time two points in dispute between the North and the South, which tended to facilitate an exchange of concessions and compensations. A site for the residence of the federal government was to be selected. Should the federal city be placed on the banks of the Hudson, on those of the Delaware, or of the Potomac, in the midst of the commercial and free states, or in the midst of the agricultural and slave states? For nearly a year that the subject had been constantly before Congress, the representatives of New York, Pennsylvania, and New Virginia, had been vehemently urging the opposite pretensions of their respective states without any result. To engage that the claim of Virginia, with respect to residence, should be admitted, provided she would promise to give way on the financial question, — such was the basis of the compromise which Jefferson undertook to get accepted by his friends of the opposition. He invited the principal leaders of Congress to his house, and it was at his table that the bargain was concluded. Hamilton's bill passed,* the city of Washington was founded, and dismemberment avoided.

* July 16, 1790.



The triumph of the bill was an immense success for the Secretary of the Treasury. His renown in the country, his ascendency over Congress, his influence over Washington's mind, were considerably augmented by it. In Congress, as in the Cabinet, the preponderance was his. But it was certainly not with a view to such results that Jefferson had accepted the honour of accommodating the quarrel. Consequently, as soon as he became sensible of the full extent of the service he had rendered Colonel Hamilton, his annoyance at having so thoughtlessly aggrandized his colleague quite spoilt all his pleasure in having been useful to his country. 'I was duped,' so he expressed himself two years after, in a letter to the President, 'by the Secretary of the Treasury, and made a tool for forwarding his schemes, not then sufficiently understood by me; and of all the errors of my political life, this has occasioned me the deepest regret.'* But at the time of the bill's passing, his jealousy was as yet unaroused, and he was entirely given up to joy and hope: —

'At length,' he says, 'the difficulties are got rid of, and I see nothing now likely to cause any future misunderstandings between state and state. . . . Congress separated the day before yesterday, having in the latter part of their session reacquired the harmony which had always distinguished their proceedings, till the two disagreeable subjects of the assumption and residence were introduced. . . . It is not foreseen that anything so generative of dissension can arise again, and therefore the friends of the government hope that this difficulty, once surmounted by the states, everything will work well.'†

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* Jefferson's Works, vol. iii. p. 460. Letter to Washington, Sept. 9, 1792.

† Ibid. vol. iii. pp. 165, 184.



The friends of government were in error, and Jefferson too. The pacification was only on the surface. The session over, the agitation continued in the country. The public had a dim presentiment that the financial dispute was but the prelude to a long war between opposite principles and interests. People met, and excited each other for the next campaign, and Virginia continued to be the focus of an opposition which became more violent daily. On November 26, 1790, Jefferson could still speak of it with sharp contempt. 'The government is too well nerved to be overawed by individual opposition,'* he wrote to Gouverneur Morris. But on February 4, 1791, all was changed in his eyes: it was now the opposition which was too strong for the government not to yield to it. 'Whether these measures be right or wrong abstractedly, more attention should be paid to the general opinion,'† he wrote to Mason; and, in order to add example to precept, he addressed a note to the President, for the purpose of proving that the establishment of a national bank, proposed by the Secretary of the Treasury and sanctioned by Congress, was not constitutional.‡ This was his first act of hostility against Hamilton. Dating from this day, Jefferson was in the Cabinet the representative of the opposition, of which Madison was the organ in Congress. He immediately set himself at work to render it more compact and more disseminative; to bring together those of its leaders who were still separated by the remembrance of their own feuds;§

* Jefferson's Works, vol. iii. p. 198.

† Ibid. vol. iii. p. 209.

‡ Ibid. vol. vii. p. 555. Feb. 15, 1791.

§ Ibid. vol. iii. pp. 209, 210; Letter to Colonel Mason, Feb. 4, 1791.



to procure for it an instrument of diffusion, by furnishing Fréneau, the editor of the National Gazette, with matter, information, and an appointment as clerk in the Secretary of State's office.* Under his able direction, the opposition became, in less than a month, a party capable of influencing every part of the United States. Various causes had till then prevented its taking much hold on the fluctuating mass of respectable people. The opposition was anti-federalist in its origin, and anti-federalist opinions were looked upon with suspicion by the Americans since they had experienced the benefits of the constitution. The opposition had been almost exclusively recruited from the South, and any geographical misunderstanding alarmed the partisans of the Union. As yet it had only served local interests, or discussed technical questions; and the only way of deeply affecting the masses is either by presenting them with great ideas, that are vague and at the same time not complex, which do not require being clearly understood in order to strike the imagination, or with big words, exaggerated and violent, which speak to the passions, and are their own interpreters.

The greatest service which Jefferson rendered the opposition was that of supplying it with a principle to represent, and with popular apprehensions to work upon. In giving it the name of the republican party, he gave it a standard and a war-cry. The whole nation was republican; so republican, that the republic could have very well done without defenders. 'As to the idea of transforming this government into a monarchy, I do not believe,' said Washington, 'there are ten men

* Jefferson's Works, vol. iii. pp. 215, 464; Letter to Fréneau, Feb. 4, 1791. Hamilton's Works, vol. vii. pp. 5–16.



in the United States, whose opinions are worth attention, who entertain such a thought.' *

It is unfortunately one of the characteristics of democratic societies to be almost always disposed to fancy themselves menaced; and a sure way to obtain the confidence of the masses is to back their suspicions, and speculate on their credulity.† By the mere name which the opposition arrogated to itself, it constantly kept before the public the phantom of monarchy. If men so moderate as Madison could think themselves called upon to make a distinct declaration of their republicanism, their adversaries could be scarcely anything else than royalists and aristocrats; the administration must necessarily be engaged in some sinister plot against the institutions of the country; such, in fact, was the interpretation put upon certain matters which had given rise to suspicion, in the outward carriage of the members of the government, such, for instance, as the Vice-President John Adams, pompously going about, like a prince, in his carriage with six horses; Mrs. Washington, on her entrance into New York, receiving a salute of thirteen guns; the presidential palace, and the luxury and etiquette which gave it a resemblance to Versailles; the servants in livery, the guests in full dress, everybody standing before the head of the state; and, to sum up all, the ball at which Washington had sat upon a sofa resembling a throne,

* Jefferson's Works, vol. ix. p. 122; Ana.

† [Is not this simply because in democratical societies society is the governor, and that all government is naturally apprehensive and sensitive? An enlightened democracy would be no more liable to false panics and absurd fears than an enlightened monarchy. The latter is a *rara avis*: nevertheless it has appeared, and so may an enlightened and self-reliant democracy.]

and that committee of senate which had gone so far as to wish to give the President the title of Highness and Protector. Such invasions of the simplicity of democratic manners could have been advised only, so it was surmised, by the officers who, at the close of the war of independence, had offered the crown to the commander-in-chief, and founded the military and hereditary order of Cincinnati. Their designs had not changed; Hamilton was their leader. Had he not, in the very midst of the Convention at Philadelphia, proclaimed his preference for British institutions? In passing from mouth to mouth, these charges became from hour to hour more venomous, and made such ravages even in the minds of persons best disposed to the government, that Hamilton wrote to John Adams, whom opinion designated as his accomplice: —

'I have a letter from a well-informed friend in Virginia, who says, "All the persons I converse with are prosperous and happy, and yet most of them, including the friends of the Government, appear to be much alarmed at a supposed system of policy tending to subvert the republican government of the country." Were ever men more ingenious to torment themselves with phantoms?' *

The Virginian correspondent of the Secretary of the Treasury was no other than Washington. He had thought it necessary to call his minister's attention to these public rumours, and to enquire what answer was to be made to them.† To such absurdities, in substance wrote Hamilton, there is no other reply possible than a flat denial.‡ A very natural feeling of disdain,

* Hamilton's Works, vol. iv. p. 245. August 16, 1792.
† Ibid. vol. iv. p. 230; Washington to Hamilton, July 29, 1792.
‡ Ibid. vol. iv. p. 271; Letter to Washington, Aug. 18, 1792.



but one which too habitually influenced the conduct of the young colonel. His contempt for stupid clamour prevented his being sufficiently careful not to furnish it with any pretext. He served the republic faithfully; he knew that no other form of government was possible in the United States; but he considered the American Constitution as less perfect in itself than the English Constitution, and he said it without reserve and without prudence, making it a point of honour not to sacrifice his liberty of speech to vulgar prejudices. Of a lively and sociable temperament, it even happened to him at times, in the freedom of conversation, after a Cabinet Council, or dinner, to express his opinion in some rather exaggerated and startling form, and thus to place himself at the mercy of the good faith and discretion of his hearers. Jefferson did not neglect the opportunity of abusing them. All the inconsiderate sayings of his colleague were carefully noted by him, registered in pocket-books, whispered to his friends, then hawked about by them to be falsely interpreted, and appealed to as so many proofs of the bad intentions of the Secretary of the Treasury. At one time we have Jefferson 'attesting the God who made him,' that he had heard Hamilton defend rotten boroughs as one of the essential elements of the British Constitution, and asserting his right to infer from this that his rival was a systematic partisan of political corruption, that the venality of the federalists was the secret of his influence in Congress, and that the republican party was the guardian of public morality.* Sometimes he has heard it stated that Hamilton had, on a solemn occasion, expressed his abhorrence at the French revo-

* Jefferson's Works, vol. ix. p. 96. [For an explanation of Hamilton's language, see Appendix v.]



lution.* Sometimes again he has been told that, at a banquet, the Colonel had drank with more warmth to the health of George III. than that of the President; † and his only object in repeating this wretched gossip, was to make his adversaries appear as supporters of Mr. Pitt. He even affected to have learned on good authority, 'that they had secured an asylum and pensions to themselves in England;' ‡ and there would be fools, even at this day, to believe it, if, on reperusing, towards the close of his life, the paper to which he had consigned his asserted discovery, he had not himself been shocked at his own credulity or his past violence, and had not, in the margin, suffered this cry of conscience to escape: — 'Impossible as to Hamilton; he was far above that!' § But, while yielding to this long-deferred return of equity, it was Jefferson's clear intention not to destroy all the effect, nor to lose the whole benefit, of his anecdote. He did not sacrifice it in that process of elimination to which, some few years before his death, he subjected the perfidious collection of small facts intended to illustrate the history of his time, and keep up in the minds of future generations the impression which, in his lifetime, he had worked upon with such persistent trickery. Under the penalty of being obliged to acknowledge that he had made the opposition play an odious and ridiculous part, he was condemned to maintain the existence of 'this corrupt squadron formed by Hamilton to bring back King, Lords, and Commons, and which, deciding the voice of the legislature, have manifested their dispositions to get rid

* Jefferson's Works, vol. ix. p. 177.
† Ibid. vol. ix. p. 197.
‡ Ibid. vol. ix. pp. 144, 146.
§ Ibid. vol. ix. p. 146.

of the limitations imposed by the constitution on the general legislature,'* and he especially depended on the revelations of what might be called his police-reports, to justify the name and dissemble the tactics of his party — low tactics, and which could not have succeeded apart from the fanatical passions by which they were directed.

Jefferson was too well aware of the power of sincerity not to do his best to lend himself to the illusion he had conjured up. In his correspondence with his most intimate friends, he is incessantly speaking of a monarchical plot like a man who believes in it without cold-blooded and hypocritical premeditation. The augurs of American democracy could look each other in the face without laughing. However, if Jefferson was but too conscious of the nature of the part he was playing to be himself its first dupe, he, at the same time, found it both too good and too convenient to make up his mind to throw it aside. In vain did John Adams and Hamilton give him the frankest and most satisfactory explanations of their views respecting their country;† it suited him to be uneasy, and it was agreeable to him to be unjust. This clever freethinker had great difficulty in admitting that it was possible to oppose his opinions and cross his paths with an honest purpose. His mind was despotic, his nerves irritable; all resistance shocked him, all strife fretted him, and every opponent became in his eyes an enemy, the more detestable in proportion as he was more formidable.

* Jefferson's Works, vol. iii. pp. 361, 362.

† Ibid. vol. ix. p. 99. See the Works of John Adams, vol. viii. p. 506, for a letter of John Adams to Jefferson, July 29, 1791. [See Appendix vi. for a conversation between Hamilton and Jefferson, August 13, 1791.]



Jefferson continued to make some allowances for John Adams, because he did not attach much importance to John Adams, but he could not pardon Hamilton for having the advantage over him of natural superiority and political courage. It was the Secretary of State who had received the first place in the Cabinet, and it was the Secretary of the Treasury who had taken in it the position of a Prime Minister. It was Jefferson who most caressed public opinion, and it was Hamilton who, at a given moment, could directly exercise the most powerful influence over it. The Colonel had his opinion upon all matters, and to give it effect he never hesitated to interfere in the departments of his colleagues, to control their acts, at the risk of wounding their self-love, or of compromising himself. He had no fear whatever of the public; he could and dared address it, and was always ready to take up his pen to unmask his adversaries, and unveil their sophisms; he was therefore a formidable combatant, with whom it was dangerous to enter into the lists. His old companions in arms used playfully to call him the 'little lion,'* and after the publication of one of his most telling pamphlets, he wrung from Jefferson this spiteful homage, 'Hamilton is really a colossus to the anti-republican party. Without numbers, he is a host within himself.' †

Jefferson was not at all over-anxious, it will be easily conceived, to face such an adversary in open fight. Amongst his intimate friends he reviled his colleague's measures with seemingly the most careless openness; he designated him without scruple to the rage of the

* Life of Hamilton, by his Son, vol. i. p. 64.

† Jefferson's Works, vol. iv. p. 121; Letter to Madison, Sep. 2, 1795.

democratic press; but at the same time he took care, with all the slyness of an old diplomatist, never to furnish him with grounds for an official complaint—never in any way to encroach upon his functions. He took care to disavow all participation in the newspaper articles he was instigating, to avoid any rupture which might have incurred the President's displeasure, and afforded an opportunity for Hamilton's great abilities for open warfare. Finally, he was aware that the position was a delicate one, and the difficulty of keeping on the safe side great; he soon, therefore, grew weary of having to exercise a vigilance which might prove insufficient to keep him entirely out of danger. The contest in the cabinet had continued for barely a year, when he was already talking of retiring from it to go and live a rural life in his country seat at Monticello.* Jefferson was not fond of exertion; he was one of those politicians who employ all their art in placing themselves in the midst of a great stream, and being carried along with its current. The republican party was now launched, and on the incline down which American democracy was sooner or later to be precipitated. The work of Jefferson was accomplished; he had only to let things work out their own course, and could wait till his hour was come. It could not be otherwise than advantageous to him not to be daily and hourly exposing himself to his enemies' fire, and not to be publicly identifying himself with the petty manœuvres of his friends. Their victory was certain, without any chance of its being near. Their number was increasing from day to day, but they were still in a minority in the country as well as in Congress, and the election for the

* Jefferson's Works, vol. ix. pp. 101, 103.



presidency was drawing near. Should Washington refuse to accept office a second time, it must pass into the hands of the federalists for four years. The great concern of Jefferson was to effect his own retirement from office, and to prevent the President from doing so; to keep himself in reserve for the presidency, and to induce Washington to retain it until the day when the republican party should be in a position to bestow it on their chief.

An eagerness to withdraw from public life was a feeling common to Washington and his minister, of which the latter very cleverly made use in order to effect an intimacy with the General, and to seem to rise to his elevation of view, while he at the same time respectfully recognised the distance which separated their positions, and exempted him, a simple secretary of state, from that glorious servitude which the people have a right to impose on the founders of empires. Making use of his lassitude to give an impression of his disinterestedness, and of his disinterestedness to give weight to his denunciations and his advice, he complained to Washington of the continual encroachments of the treasury department, and made exaggerated representations of its influence, which, according to him, threatened to absorb all the powers of the state, and to endanger the authority of the President himself. Hamilton, so he argued, disposed of all offices, acted upon every man's fortune, and had thus become the master of Congress, which he was dragging after him into a perilous path, where the people of the South would never consent to follow him. It was to arrest him in this course, which was leading to disunion by passing through monarchy, that the opposition had been formed; but were Washington to retire from office,

were he to permit the country to be left to itself before giving it the time to ascertain who were its true friends, the opposition would be utterly incapable of preventing the evils it foresaw. Washington alone it was who could check the extreme folly of the federalists, who could give confidence to the republicans, and serve as a link between the North and South. So long as Congress was not freed from the yoke of Hamilton, so long the republic would be in danger, and so long the liberator of the United States should hold himself bound not to commit the destinies of the country to other hands. But from the day when an honest republican majority should take the place of the herd of *Anglomen* jobbers who were giving laws to America, Washington would be relieved of any further sacrifice to his sense of duty, and this possibly before his next term of office expired.* All this was said in a modest and winning manner, a little too got up, perhaps, not to be somewhat suspicious to Washington, yet too complimentary to displease him. He replied to Jefferson in a similar tone, and, though carefully avoiding any declaration of his intentions with regard to the presidency, spoke to him in a most kind and confidential way on the mischief which would arise from the breaking up of the cabinet. A man so considerable as he could not withdraw from it without causing great public apprehension, and giving rise to the supposition that there was about to be a change of policy. His department, in fact, was the really political department. The sphere of the treasury was much less extensive, and its

* May 23, 1791. Jefferson's Works, vol. iii. p. 359. See Conversations with Washington, vol. ix. pp. 101–105, 116–118, 120–123, 130–132, 134. [On Jefferson's *half*-craze, see Appendix vii.].

duties less important. It was impossible to do without him; it was necessary to have a counterpoise to Hamilton's influence.* It was thus that Washington replied to the advances of the opposition, which affected not to attack him personally, and to regard him as entirely unconnected with the policy it was assailing. He accepted the blind without being its dupe, and, treated as a constitutional king by the leaders of the republican party, he, in his turn, treated them as friends of the crown, who were unshaken in their duty to it, even when their views were at variance with its own. Therefore he felt justified in appealing to Madison's great experience, and in making sure of his support by asking his advice whenever some great step was to be taken, by which the President was personally to be brought in question. But he could also disallow the blind, and when the democratic journals made too lavish a use of it for the purpose of fomenting dissensions with impunity, and obstructing the laws, he haughtily took their attacks to himself,† and said so to Jefferson in language strong enough to intimidate the factious secretary of state, without, however, being decided enough to deter him from eventually heaping the most painful mortifications on his own head by his intrigues.

Up to this time Hamilton had made no reprisals on Jefferson, but his patience was now exhausted. He took up his pen, and, hardly concealing himself under the pseudonym of 'An American,' he made known to the public, through the columns of the 'United States Gazette,' the scandalous relations of the secretary of

* Jefferson's Works, vol. ix. pp. 103, 121.

† Ibid. vol. xi. p. 117; Ana.

state with the enemies both of the constitution and of the national credit, the secret support he gave Fréneau's journal, the subterfuges he had recourse to in order to elude the censure of respectable men; then, making an appeal to his self-respect, he summoned him to choose between the government and the opposition.* The blow told. It was obvious whence it came; the President, whom up to this time it had suited to take no cognizance of this quarrel, could no longer ignore it; the two rivals were called upon to explain their conduct.† By his artifices, Jefferson had brought about the open rupture he dreaded, and he found himself, to his great annoyance, obliged as a point of honour to remain at his post; at the risk of seeming to yield to his enemies, he had to continue in an office which compelled him to act severely against his friends. In point of fact, it was at their instigation that the western counties of Pennsylvania had combined to resist the levying of the tax upon spirits. In a proclamation, the President threatened the rebels with a public prosecution;‡ he desired to have it countersigned by Jefferson. The minister submitted without a murmur. He punctually discharged the official duties of his department; but his annoyance at being compelled to carry out a policy which was not his own had the continual effect of embittering him from day to day, and, while strenuously protesting that he had nothing to do with the proceedings of the republicans, he more and more committed himself to their passions and their plans.

It was certainly not without his knowledge that, for

* Hamilton's Works, vol. vii. pp. 5–16. August, 1792.

† See Jefferson's Works, vol. iii. p. 459, for his letter of Sept. 9, 1792; and Hamilton's Works, vol. iv. pp. 303–305.

‡ September 15, 1792.

the mere purpose of exciting the public mind, the republicans formally denounced Hamilton, in the house of representatives, as guilty of malversation, and that, by way of an antimonarchical manifestation, they opposed the re-election of John Adams to the vice-presidency.* Hamilton cleared himself of the charge; but for nearly a whole month his probity had been brought in question. John Adams was elected, but 53 out of 130 votes had declared the republic in danger. They were those of New York, Virginia, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Georgia. The Federalists had triumphed throughout almost the whole of the country to the north of the Potomac, where the influence of the richer classes, though already much shaken, still preponderated. The clergy, the bar, the magistracy, the great capitalists, the bankers, and shipowners, those whom commercial ties, legal traditions, or religious affinities attached to England, those who by their educational requirements, or the nature of their occupations, were raised above petty local considerations, those who by their profession were led to conceive the advantage or feel the want of a well ordered society, were favourable to the policy of government. But the rural classes, more obstinate in their hatred towards the mother country, and in their distrust of government, more confined within the narrow circle of provincial life, less enlightened, less prosperous, less sensible of the advantages of a regular government, were more open to the lures of the opposition. Originating amongst the territorial aristocracy of the South, its influence naturally tended to spread itself among the small landed proprietors of New

* Jefferson's Works, vol. iii. p. 494; see his letter to Pinckney, Dec. 3, 1792; also vol. ix. p. 139.



England, while the agitation caused by the French revolution brought over to it the wavering multitude of working men and small traders. Jefferson was full of joy and hope; 'The tide changes!' he exclaimed, in the month of December 1792, when hailing 'the old spirit of 1776,' which was reawakening to the sound of the cannon of Valmy; 'the tide which, after our former relaxed government, took a violent course towards the opposite extreme, and seemed ready to hang everything round with the tassels and baubles of monarchy, is now getting back, as we hope, to a just mean, a government of laws addressed to the reason of the people, and not to their weaknesses. . . . The event of the French revolution is now little doubted of, even by its enemies; the sensations it has produced here, and the indications of them in the public papers, have shown that the form our own government was to take depended much more on the events of France than anybody had before imagined. . . The monocrats here still affect to disbelieve all this (the retreat of the Duke of Brunswick, &c.), while the republicans are rejoicing and taking to themselves the name of Jacobins, which, two months ago, was fixed on them by way of stigma.' *

A great change had just taken place in the character of the struggle between the two parties. Hitherto it had been principally confined to questions of domestic policy; hereafter it was to turn almost entirely on questions of foreign policy.

A divergency between their diplomatic views was coeval with their origin; but, previous to the proclaiming of the French republic, and the breaking out of the

* Jefferson's Works, vol. iii. p. 495–504.



war between France and Europe, it had no very special occasion for displaying itself. From the very outset of the French revolution, the federalist statesmen had got a glimpse of its hidden weakness, had doubts of its success, and had shown a repugnance to connect the United States too closely with the destinies of a nation, the strength of which, according to their views, must be for a long time paralysed by anarchy, and the examples set by which seemed pregnant with danger to their own country. On the 19th of April, 1790, John Adams wrote to Richard Price, thanking him for having sent him his famous *Discourse on the Love of Country* to which Burke replied by his *Reflections on the French Revolution*, as follows:—

'From the year 1760 to this hour, the whole scope of my life has been to support such principles and propagate such sentiments. No sacrifices of myself or my family, no dangers, no labours, have been too much for me in this great cause. The revolution in France could not, therefore, be indifferent to me; but I have learned by awful experience to rejoice with trembling. I know that encyclopædists and economists, Diderot and D'Alembert, Voltaire and Rousseau, have contributed to this great event more than Sidney, Locke, or Hoadley, perhaps more than the American revolution; and I own to you I know not what to make of a republic of thirty million atheists.' *

So, too, it was with a "mixture of pleasure and apprehension" that Hamilton, October 6th, 1789, congratulated M. de La Fayette on the ephemeral triumphs of the constitutional party: —

'As a friend to mankind and to liberty, I rejoice in the efforts which you are making to establish it, while I fear much for the final success of the attempts, for the fate of

* John Adams's Works, vol. ix. p. 563.



and under their scrutiny; of being incessantly obliged to contend, to dissemble, to restrain and to compromise himself; he was once again restored to peace, tranquillity, and freedom of speech and action. In Philadelphia all his ideas were contested, all his words travestied, and all his acts assailed. At Monticello, no more ill-wishers, no more contradicters; his neighbours paid court to him; his guests took him for their oracle; he was surrounded exclusively by idolizers and believers. Nevertheless, he soon got tired both of his provincial admirers and his fields, and at the end of two or three months no longer celebrated the charms of rural life, except from habit or the influence of a foregone conclusion. He vowed, indeed, he would never again abandon his retreat; he protested his disgust for politics, but his letters were full of them, and he could not speak of them with composure. This sage philosopher, so detached from the world, had occasionally in his solitude singular transports of fanatical rage and visionary hope. Fixing his eye on Europe, and speaking of the French, he said:—

Over the foreign powers I am convinced they will triumph completely; and I cannot but hope that that triumph, and the consequent disgrace of the invading tyrants, is destined in order of events to kindle the wrath of the people of Europe against those who have dared to embroil them in such wickedness, and to bring at length kings, nobles, and priests to the scaffolds which they have been so long deluging with human blood. I am still warm whenever I think of these scoundrels, though I do it as seldom as I can, preferring infinitely to contemplate the tranquil growth of my lucerne and potatoes. *

* Jefferson's Works, vol. iv. p. 104; Letter to Tench Cope, May 1, 1794.



To believe him, there was only one thing else he could have looked on with more pleasure, and that was the invasion of England by the French:—

'If,' he says, 'I could but see them (the French and Dutch) now at peace with the rest of their continent, I should have little doubt of dining with Pichegru in London next autumn; for I believe I should be tempted to leave my clover for awhile to go and hail the dawn of liberty and republicanism in that island.'*

But it was not Europe alone that had the privilege of disturbing Jefferson's equanimity. He took advantage of his leisure secretly to indulge himself in a positive licentiousness of language on American politics. He charged it as a crime on the part of government to have suppressed the disturbances in Pennsylvania, and on the part of the opposition to have countenanced their suppression; he reproached Washington with having artfully directed public opinion against the real promoters of the insurrection, the democratic societies, and Madison with not having madly defied him in their defence.† He who had suggested to his friends the prudent manœuvre of which M. Genet was the victim, now sanctimoniously blamed them for having refused the cooperation of dangerous allies, and for having rallied around the government in order to avoid being separated from the nation. Being no longer responsible for the conduct of the republican party, he was much more intent on exciting than directing it—of urging it on, than of saving it from misadventure. The great object with it should be to embarrass the state, even at the risk of a momentary collision with public

* Jefferson's Works, vol. iv. p. 118; Letter to William B. Giles, April 27, 1795.

† Ibid. vol. iv. p. 110; Letter to Madison, Dec. 28, 1794.



opinion; slight reactions in favour of the government could not prevent the Federalists being eventually exhausted in their attempts to put down insubordination. They were intrenching themselves behind the constitution and the President, the two great objects of popular respect; they must be pursued and attacked even in the ark itself. There was no great harm in annihilating those provisions of the Federal code which were turning to the advantage of the enemies of the republic;* or in somewhat detracting from the lustre of a great and good man, whose virtues were a blight on the good cause—an ungrateful task certainly, but one which Jefferson meant should be executed by the obscure tools of his party. For he was thoroughly decided never himself to pass for an enemy of the constitution and Washington, never to come into open collision with these two great moral influences. Did any awkward reports get wind respecting his intrigues against the government, he was instantly on the alert; he lost not a moment in writing to the President and giving them the lie, breaking out into expressions of wrath against the miserable slanderers who dared to transform his most trivial suggestions into black designs against the state, and, the better to cloak his duplicity, haughtily admitting the innocent freedom of his language.† The 'Moniteur' of January 25, 1797, soon brought Washington a curious specimen of it.

Being on ill terms with the American government, the Directory thought it quite fair play to make known what one of the most eminent citizens of the United States thought of Washington and his policy. It

* Jefferson's Works, vol. iv. p. 135; Letter to Madison, March 27, 1796.

† Ibid. vol. iv. p. 141.



ordered the official journal to print the following letter, addressed by Jefferson to M. Mazzei, an Italian diplomatist deep in the confidence of the illustrious democrat though not over discreet:—

MY DEAR FRIEND, Monticello, April 24, 1796.

. . . . . .

The aspect of our politics has wonderfully changed since you left us. In place of that noble love of liberty and republican government which carried us triumphantly through the war, an Anglican, monarchical, aristocratical party has sprung up, whose avowed object is to draw over us the substance, as they have already done the forms, of the British government. The main body of our citizens, however, remain true to their political principles; the whole landed interest is republican, and so is a great mass of talent. Against us are the executive, the judiciary, two out of three branches of the legislature, all the officers of the government, all who want to be officers, all timid men who prefer the calm of despotism to the boisterous sea of liberty, British merchants and Americans trading on British capital, speculators and holders in the banks and public funds,—a contrivance invented for the purposes of corruption, and for assimilating us in all things to the rotten as well as the sound parts of the British model. It would give you a fever were I to name to you the apostates who have gone over to these heresies; men who were Sampsons in the field and Solomons in the council, but who have had their heads shorn by the harlot England.' *

Knowing how much his reputation in America might suffer from the slightest antagonism between his memory and that of the founder of independence, Jefferson laboured to prove, after the General's death, that the

* 'Moniteur,' January 25, 1797. See the original of Jefferson's letter to Mazzei, April 24, 1796, in his Works, vol. iv. p. 139. The letter in the 'Moniteur' is followed by a long article tending to show that the Directory had a right to break off all relations with the American government.

latter never took to himself, nor ever could take to himself, the epithets of Sampson and Solomon;* but in Washington's lifetime this impossibility was by no means so obvious to him. In the confusion and anxiety caused by this untoward publication of his letter, he sorrowfully acknowledged, 'I could not disavow it wholly, because the greatest part was mine, in substance though not in form . . . without bringing on a personal difference between General Washington and myself,' and also 'embroiling me with all those with whom his character is still popular, that is to say, nine-tenths of the people of the United States.' †

Some Federalist writers have gone so far as to affirm that Washington, having asked for an explanation from his former minister in respect of this singular document, received an apologetic letter in reply, which, by a criminal act of courtesy, subsequently disappeared from the General's papers; but this seems to be anything but proved.‡ One fact, however, appears to be quite clear; which is, that after this disagreeable incident they never saw each other again. On several occasions Jefferson passed the door of Mount Vernon without calling. He did well; he had lost his hold on the

* Jefferson's Works, vol. vii. p. 364; Letter to Martin Van Buren, June 29, 1824.

† Ibid. vol. iv. p. 193; Letter to Madison, August 3, 1797.

‡ [The presumption, however, is far from being disproved. In Appendix VIII. will be found a note which has been appended to the second edition of Henry Lee's 'Observations on Jefferson,' by the editor, Mr. R. Carter Lee, referring to the rumour, and somewhat confirming it. It appears, moreover, that Major Leah, who had charge of Washington's papers after his death, committed suicide; and there are well-informed persons in America, as I learn on good authority, who believe that remorse at having consented to the destruction of these letters had something to do with his death.]



General's confidence and esteem; his duplicity had been laid bare, his complicity with the systematic detractors of Washington had become evident. By borrowing the offensive language of the democratic press he had established an intimate connection between himself and the newspapers which were for ever speaking of the great citizen whose friend he professed to be, 'in exaggerated and indecent terms,' so said the subject of them, such 'as could scarcely be applied to a Nero, a notorious defaulter, and even to a common pickpocket,'* and which on the day when the liberator of his country retired from office, could express themselves as follows:—'Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation,' was the pious ejaculation of a man who beheld a flood of happiness rushing in upon mankind. If ever there was a time which would license the reiteration of this exclamation' (so wrote this correspondent of the 'Aurora'), 'that time is now arrived, for the man who is the source of all the misfortunes of our country is this day reduced to a level with his fellow-citizens, and is no longer possessed of power to multiply evils upon the United States.' In this way did the 'Aurora,' the most violent organ of the Democratic party, celebrate the inauguration of the new President, John Adams, one of the leaders of the Federalist party.†

Defeated in the contest for the presidency, the republicans had nevertheless reason to shout victory. If Washington's retirement had not given them possession of power, it had given them the country. A few

* Washington's Writings, vol. xi. p. 139; Letter to Jefferson, July 6, 1796.

† March 4, 1797. Hildreth's History of the United States, 2nd series, vol. ii. p. 43.

months before the election Jefferson, speaking of the Federalists, wrote to Munroe :—

> They see that nothing can support them but the colossus of the President's merits with the people, and the moment he retires that his successor, if a monocrat, will be overborne by the republican sense of his constituents; if a republican, he will, of course, give fair play to that sense, and lead things into the channel of harmony between the governors and governed. In the mean time, patience.*

The state of things was very much altered since the time when the opposition affected to regard Washington as the best barrier against the triumph of the party which supported his administration. It was,obviously, to Washington that the Federalists were indebted for their late success. Since 1793 they had lost the majority in Congress, and could only command factitious majorities formed under the pressure of Washington's influence over the people, always disposed 'to support his judgement against their own and that of their representatives.'† Washington's successor had been chosen in the midst of a sudden change of wind adverse to the republican faction, and yet, in spite of this piece of good luck, John Adams had carried his election by a majority of three only over his opponent Jefferson, who thus became Vice-President.

When he suffered his friends to put him forward as a candidate for the presidency, Jefferson had not overestimated either the chances of success or the inconvenience of defeat. He submitted with very good grace to be nothing more than the second person in

* Jefferson's Works, vol. iv. p. 148 ; Letter to Colonel Munroe, June 12, 1796.

† Ibid. vol. iv. p. 140; Letter to Colonel Munroe, June 12, 1796.



the state. The times were full of difficulty; abroad the Directory had broken off all diplomatic relations with the government of the United States; peace was endangered, and the guns of French privateers were already heard in the distance; at home every heart was aroused by these sounds of war. The republicans assumed the colours of France, the Federalists mounted those of the old continental army; fights took place in the streets, the tricoloured cockade on one side, and the black cockade on the other. 'This is not a moment to covet the helm,'* said Jefferson. Accordingly the Vice-President had quite made up his mind to incur no responsibility whatever by interfering in the management of public affairs, and to keep himself completely aloof from political action.† The duties of his office permitted him to do this; all they required of him was to preside in the Senate, and, save in the case of an equal division, he had not even to vote. Nothing, therefore, prevented his making his seat in that body a post of observation. Placed in the middle of the arena, without being obliged to descend into it, he could claim to live on good terms with everybody, and could avail himself of his official relations with the two parties for the purpose of acting by turns on both government and opposition.

As soon as the election was over, some little coquetting took place between John Adams and him. The President flattered himself he could make use of Jefferson to smoothe down the difficulties with foreign countries, and to keep in check the fraction of the

* Jefferson's Works, vol. iv. p. 152; Letter to Edward Rutledge, December 27, 1796.

† Ibid. vol. iv. p. 171; Letter to Madison, January 22, 1797.



Federalist party under the influence of Colonel Hamilton. The Vice-President, on the other hand, proposed making use of Adams in order to keep up the dissensions between the old friends of Washington, and to prevent a war with France—the thing of all others the most formidable to the opposition; for a war, even though an unpopular one, could not fail in time to rally the country around the administration. But they were both acting without taking into account their distrust of each other, and the passions of those who surrounded them. At the very first steps they made towards one another they were in the presence of insurmountable barriers, and, in spite of themselves, soon found they were wider asunder than before their mutual advances. Party hatred had become so violent, was exercising such despotic influence over men's minds, that Jefferson began to find it very embarrassing.

'You and I,' he wrote to Edward Rutledge, 'have formerly seen warm debates and high political passions. But gentlemen of different politics would then speak to each other, and separate the business of the senate and that of society. It is not so now. Men who have been intimate all their lives, cross the streets to avoid meeting, and turn their heads another way, lest they should be obliged to touch their hats. This may do for young men, with whom passion is enjoyment. But it is afflicting to peaceable minds. Tranquillity is the old man's milk.'

But who is to be held responsible for this change in the political manners of the United States? Courtesy in a struggle supposes a certain degree of fairness and reciprocal esteem. Good relations are incompatible with bad manners. Jefferson more than anyone else

* Jefferson's Works, vol. iv. p. 191; June 24, 1797.



had contributed to introduce the use of discourtesies into public business, to alter the standard of moral obligations, and to compromise the dignity of political life. When parties can go so far as to employ means like those by which Hamilton was about to be victimised, every social feeling must necessarily have disappeared from the arena, and barbarism must have overrun it, accompanied with all its brutishness and all its fury.

In 1792, when Hamilton's enemies, at their wit's end for resources against his policy, were endeavouring to persuade themselves they had a right to call his probity in question, three of the republican leaders, Muhlenburg, Venable, and Munroe, had the misfortune to come in contact with certain adventurers, who, wishing to work on the credulity and hatred of the opposition to their own advantage, were doing their best to furnish the means of ruining him. The three friends fall into the trap headforemost. They are shown one or two letters of the Secretary of the Treasury, the sense of which they cannot clearly make out; they at once conclude there must be something criminal in it. They are told that Hamilton often assisted Reynolds, the holder of these letters, with his purse and credit; it is proved to them that the Secretary of the Treasury takes an exceeding interest in Mrs. Reynolds, and they infer from this that he has some secret motive for keeping on terms with the husband. They are assured that the husband did, in fact, act as Hamilton's agent for playing in the public funds; they believe it, and immediately draw up two long statements containing the formidable results of their investigation. Armed with these documents, Messrs. Muhlenburg, Venable, and Munroe make a solemn visit to Hamilton, and threaten to denounce



him to the President should he decline to give them a satisfactory explanation of this mysterious affair. To their great astonishment, Hamilton is not at all disconcerted; he acknowledges his letters; he owns that, in order to conceal a fault he had committed, he had been obliged to purchase the silence of Reynolds, a wretch of a husband, who, in order to extort money, had taken advantage of his right to be jealous, and who, to revenge himself for not having got as much money as he expected, had contrived the plot. Finally, to remove all doubts from their minds, Hamilton begins to read a long series of *billets-doux* from Mrs. Reynolds, and of threatening applications from her husband. The three members of Congress, confounded at their silly interference in an affair which had so little to do with politics, refuse to hear another word. In taking their leave they excuse themselves to Hamilton, and declare they are entirely convinced of his innocence, but when they get home they confine themselves to stating, in a private memorandum, that they have quitted Hamilton 'under the *impression* that their suspicions were unfounded;' they engage, moreover, to see that the documents in their possession shall not find their way back into the hands of the intriguers who had made so detestable a use of them, and yet Munroe renews his relations with these wretches. Under the influence of their suggestions, he takes it into his head that Hamilton had, perhaps, accused himself of gallantry in order to elude the charge of peculation, and he jots down this mischievous notion in a fresh memorandum, which he adds to the other documents confided to his care. Before setting out for France on a diplomatic mission, he leaves these dangerous papers in the hands of a 'respectable Virginian



friend,' who, of course, completely absorbed in politics, forgets to watch over the safety of the deposit.* In 1797 the whole collection appears in a venomous periodical published by one Callender, a cynical writer, whose occupation it then was to vilify every respectable man who happened to be on bad terms with Jefferson.

Called upon by Hamilton to say whether or not he believed the imputations contained in his last memorandum, Munroe obstinately refused to explain himself. 'It was impossible for him,' he said, 'to come to any conclusion on the subject until he knew what defence the person inculpated could make. In vain did Hamilton appeal to his sense of honour, in vain did he address the most insulting comments to him upon his indelicacy; Munroe remained immovable, and, while declaring himself ready to give personal satisfaction to Hamilton, if the latter were disposed to challenge him, he showed a fixed determination not to take the initiative in a duel, which might possibly get his adversary out of his scrape on too easy terms. Hamilton was thus placed in the cruel dilemma of having either to give public evidence of his adultery, or to be adjudged guilty of peculation; to violate all the decencies of life, or to sacrifice his character for probity. In spite of the levity of his conduct, he was tenderly attached to Mrs. Hamilton, and it was revolting to him to make her acquainted with these secret amours. He at once made up his mind, however; he preferred, for his own sake, and for the sake of those who belonged to him, scandal to dishonour; and it is impossible to read, without a feeling of indignation at Munroe, this cruel confession

* [Was this Jefferson? Hamilton suspected that it was, and Hildreth leans to the same opinion. See next note.]



wrested from a noble heart by the base and implacable malice of a political opponent :—'This confession is not made without a blush. I cannot be the apologist of any vice, because the ardour of passion may have made it mine. I can never cease to condemn myself for the pang which it may inflict on a bosom eminently entitled to all my gratitude, fidelity, and love; but that bosom will approve that, even at so great an expense, I should effectually wipe away a more serious stain from a name which it cherishes with no less devotion than tenderness. The public, too, I trust, will excuse the confession. The necessity of it to my defence against a more heinous charge could alone have extorted from me so painful an indecorum.' *

In party, as in international contests, there are laws of war which cannot be broken with impunity; there are unlawful arms which cannot be used by one side without forcing their use upon the other. The republicans had soon reason to repent their having dragged the secrets of private life before the public. By a just retribution, it was Callender himself, their principal engine of defamation, who became the avenger of the Federalists. Jefferson had not accepted his services without some degree of misgiving and repugnance. He was well aware how compromising such allies are, but in the depths of his heart he could not help enjoying the controversial excesses his reason disapproved, and was content merely to despise those he might have restrained. Upon his accession to office

* Hildreth's History of the United States of America, &c., vol. ii. pp. 104–119, 2nd series. See in this excellent work a full account of this base intrigue. Also Alexander Hamilton, 'On certain Documents of the History of the United States, for 1796 (Callender's), in which he is charged with peculation: 1797.'



Callender asked for an appointment. Jefferson's only reply was to send him fifty dollars. The indignant pamphleteer at once let the country know what his claims were on the good offices of his late patron: it was in the service of this distinguished person that he had, so he averred, written his most calumnious libels; from him he had received money and information, and to him he had even submitted the proofs of certain articles previous to publication; papers in Jefferson's own handwriting were at hand to prove it: but he was not content with merely printing these, in order to make it universally known that the very purest representatives of republican principles might have their weak side, and find themselves under an obligation to keep on good terms with a man who dared to speak out. He took the public with him into Jefferson's own house; he stated, as things proved, all the disparaging rumours which were everywhere rife in Virginia respecting the looseness of his life; he described his attempts at seducing the wife of one of his country neighbours; his amours with a mulattress servant girl, his wife's illegitimate sister, and the mother of a numerous progeny of little quadroons, still slaves in their father's house. The Federalists were now triumphant; in their turn they had the laughers on their side, and in their turn they abused their opportunity. Jefferson was cut to the quick by their cruel reprisals; and he who more than any other man was responsible for the coarse and almost ferocious tone of the American press under the presidencies of Washington and John Adams, now began to be sensible of its dangerous tendency, and could at length see that its ultimate effect must be to disgust men of high feeling and elevated intelligence with public affairs:—



'The circle,' he says, 'of characters equal to the first stations is not too large, and will be lessened by the voluntary retreat of those whose sensibilities are stronger than their confidence in the justice of public opinion. I certainly have known, and still know, characters eminently qualified for the most exalted trusts, who could not bear up against the brutal hackings and hewings of these heroes of Billingsgate. I may say, from intimate knowledge, that we should have lost the services of the greatest character of our country, had he been assailed with the degree of abandoned licentiousness now practised. The torture he felt under rare and slight attacks * proves that under those of which the Federal bands have shown themselves capable, he would have thrown up the helm in a burst of indignation.' †

At the same time that the habit of reciprocal respect became weaker and less binding, the practice of taking the law into one's own hands domesticated itself in the United States. Political duels and personal assaults were on the increase; a habit was growing up among the members of Congress of appearing in their places with bludgeons in their hands and pistols in their pockets. One day it is Mr. Lyon who, in the House of Representatives, replies to an impertinence of Mr. Griswold by spitting in his face; now it is Mr. Griswold who, after eight days' reflection, knocks over Mr. Lyon and sends him spinning amongst the members. Now it is a band of officers, who fall might and main upon the editor of the 'Aurora,' by way of inducing him to leave off abusing the militia; and now it is a

* [Attacks, however, as deeply affecting Washington's public character as these did Jefferson's private character. Jefferson, as a party to them, was quite likely to under-estimate their virulence; still he had no right to represent them as slight — that is, to represent Washington as a sensitive fool.]

† Jefferson's Works, vol. iv. p. 576; Letter to Judge Sullivan, March 21, 1805.



young orator, full of talent and promise, Mr. John Randolph, who, in a full house, speaks of the staff of the army as of a 'parcel of blackguards,' and who, the day after, is taken from his box and thrust out of the theatre — lamentable excesses, which seem to have become a feature in American manners, but which were almost without precedent before John Adams's presidency.

Since Washington had retired from office there was no longer any check upon party violence. His retirement had been the signal for an outburst of bad passions, which, however, did not turn so immediately to the advantage of the republican party as Jefferson anticipated. He had not succeeded in gaining over John Adams, and he had lost several of his own followers. Under the sting of his disappointment he thus wrote to Colonel Burr on June 17, 1797:—

I had always hoped that the popularity of the late President being once withdrawn from active effect, the natural feelings of the people towards liberty would restore the equilibrium between the executive and legislative departments, which had been destroyed by the superior weight and effect of that popularity; and that their natural feelings of moral obligation would discountenance the ungrateful predilection of the executive in favour of Great Britain. But unfortunately the preceding measures had already alienated the nation who was the object of them, had excited reaction from them, and this reaction has on the minds of our citizens an effect which supplies that of the Washington popularity. The effect was sensible on some of the late Congressional elections, and this it is which has lessened the republican majority in Congress. When it will be reinforced must depend on events, and these are so incalculable that I consider the future government of our country as in the air. *

* Jefferson's Works, vol. iv. p. 485.



Events now occurred which proved a terrible blow to the republican party; it nevertheless remained master of the future. By wounding the national honour of the United States, the Directory for a time paralysed the French party in America; but by wishing to make too much use of this piece of good fortune, the Federalists lost the benefit of it, and the incident which seemed at first as if it would have retarded the natural course of things, eventually accelerated it.

'France pretends to levy tribute in America!' Such was the news which, in the month of April 1798, suddenly spread consternation among the partisans of the French Directory, and drew down upon them the indignation of the masses.* 'Millions for defence, not a farthing to buy peace!' Such was the deafening cry which everywhere silenced the opposition. The imagination of the public became violently excited; people figured to themselves their independence threatened, their native soil invaded, and America at the feet of corrupt and sanguinary masters; every advocate of peace was looked upon as a French agent, every French citizen as a Jacobin spy; appeals were made to the government to act with energy, and the need of a dictatorship was openly proclaimed. In the midst of this popular

* This rumour was founded on certain despatches of the American Commissioners in Paris published by the government of the United States. Sent to France for the purpose of establishing friendly relations between the two countries, they had not succeeded—so they affirmed—in obtaining an audience from the Directory, and had been apprised by some of its subaltern officers, that nothing short of a considerable *largesse* could appease its wrath against America. If America desired to conciliate the good-will of France, she must—so said these agents—imitate the conduct of those European powers which wished to be restored to favour in that country, and engage to present the Directory with a gratification of a million of francs, and to lend the Republic twenty-five millions.



effervescence, in which fear was blended with enthusiasm, the Federalists completely lost their heads; they thought all possible and all justifiable; they persuaded themselves that the moment had come for crushing the enemies of the state, and putting an end to the cabals of factions. 'At present,' wrote Jefferson, 'the war hawks talk of septembrizing, deportation, and the examples for quelling sedition set by the French executive.'*

John Adams did nothing to moderate this dangerous excitement. Entirely given up to the self-gratification of replying in glowing language to the addresses of the deputations which, from every part of America, came to him to express their sympathy and to tender their support, he completely forgot the reserve prescribed by his position and his policy. Too straightforward not to be sincerely anxious for the maintenance of peace with France, and the restoration of internal tranquillity, he was at the same time too much under the dominion of his vanity to restrain those martial bursts of eloquence which contributed more and more to exasperate public feeling. Hamilton became alarmed. 'It is not for us,' he wrote to one of the members of the cabinet, 'particularly for the government, to breathe an irregular or violent spirit.'† Jefferson evinced more surprise than anxiety.

'The spirit,' he wrote, 'kindled up in the towns is wonderful. These and New Jersey are pouring in their addresses, offering life and fortune. Even these addresses are not the worst things, for indiscreet declarations and expressions of

* Jefferson's Works, vol. iv. p. 218; Letter to Madison, April 26, 1798.

† Hamilton's Works, vol. vi. p. 294; Letter to Wolcott, June 5, 1798.



passion may be pardoned to a multitude acting on the impulse of the moment; but we cannot expect a foreign nation to show that apathy to the answers of the President, which are more Thrasonic than the addresses. . . . Nor is it France alone against whom his threats are uttered. In Fenno, of yesterday, you will see one wherein he says to the address from Newark, "The delusions and misrepresentations which have led so many citizens, must be discountenanced by authority, as well as the citizens at large;" evidently alluding to those letters from the representatives to their constituents. . . . . I owe you a political letter. The infidelities of the post office and the circumstances of the time are against my writing fully and freely, while my own dispositions are as much against mysteries, innuendoes and half confidences. I know not which mortifies me most, that I should fear to write what I think, or my country bear such a state of things. . . . . The most long-sighted politician could not, seven years ago, have imagined that the people of this wide extended country could have been enveloped in such delusions, and made so afraid of themselves and of their own power as to surrender spontaneously to those who are manœuvring them to a form of government, the principal branches of which may be beyond their control. . . . However, the fever will not last; our countrymen are essentially republicans. They retain unadulterated the principles of '75, and those who are conscious of no change in themselves have nothing to fear in the long run.' *

To strike terror into those 'who were conscious of not having changed,' rigorous measures of public safety were proposed in Congress. It was from the scum of refugees and emigrants from Europe that the democratic party chiefly obtained recruits; Congress passed an *alien* act, empowering the President to expel foreigners from the country.† A few madmen still

* Jefferson's Works, vol. iv. pp. 238, 239, 241, 256, 259.

† June 1798.



persisted in openly denying the justice of their country's cause; a bill was brought into the Senate for punishing every citizen with death convicted of having kept up intelligence with the French, and imprisoning for a term not defined all persons who, by speech or writing, were guilty of defending the Directory, or defaming the government of the United States. On reading this bill, Hamilton was horrified at the extravagance of his friends. 'LET US NOT ESTABLISH A TYRANNY,' he wrote to Wolcott, Secretary of the Treasury under Adams. 'Energy is a very different thing from violence. If we make no false step, we shall be essentially united, but if we push things to an extreme, we shall then give to faction *body* and solidity.'*

This bill, which, under the name of *Sedition Act*, is still held in odious remembrance in America, was very much modified before it reached the House of Representatives. It there underwent further amendments before being finally adopted;† but in spite of all this it was bad in itself and dangerous to the government which had to apply it. Every restriction laid by the Federal government on liberty of speech and the press was opposed to the habits of the country and the spirit of the constitution. It was impossible that the nation should not protest against innovations of this kind, as soon as it recovered from the bewilderment into which the fear of the Jacobins had plunged it. The increase of taxation, made imperative by the great military preparations authorized by Congress, contributed a good deal to cure 'this disease of the imagination; indeed, the doctor,' observed Jefferson ironically, 'is

* Hamilton's Works, vol. vi. p. 307; Letter to Wolcott, June 29, 1798.

† July 17, 1798.



now on his way to cure it in the disguise of a tax-gatherer. But give time for the medicine to work, and for the repetition of stronger doses which must be administered. . . . The authorized expenses for the year are beyond those of any year of the late war for independence, and they are of a nature to beget great and constant expenses. The purse of the people is the real seat of sensibility.'*

In the hottest moments of the crisis Jefferson preserved his foresight and self-possession. While the greater part of the democratic leaders were retiring from Congress, discouraged or indignant, and were preparing either to surrender at discretion to the Federalists, or to induce the republican states to separate from the Union, he could manage to hope and wait. He remained firmly at his post, reviving the courage of the timid, and restraining the impatience of the violent; he prevented his party from intrenching itself in a corner of America, and abandoning the possession of the country.† He kept the opposition on the alert, and the government in check; but, while feeling the importance of not ceasing to keep up the fight at the central government, he was fully aware of the inadequacy of his means of action in Congress, and of the necessity of seeking for a fulcrum in the state legislatures, wherewith to raise the feeling of the country. Virginia and Kentucky were the strongholds of the democratic party; the legislative bodies of these two states were instructed by Jefferson to unfurl the flag of resistance to the measures which his friends had in-

* Jefferson's Works, vol. iv. pp. 257, 259.

† Ibid. vol. iv. pp. 233, 237, 239, 243; Letters to Madison and John Taylor, April and June 1798. See also vol. ix. p. 507, for a short paper entitled 'Thoughts on Lotteries,' February 18, 1826.



effectually opposed in Philadelphia as unconstitutional.* This was one of the most considerable and the least noticed acts of his political career. It was the act of a conspirator, not of a tribune of the people. Twenty-three years after he had drawn up the celebrated resolutions by which Virginia and Kentucky proclaimed the nullification of the Sedition and Alien Acts, and instigated the other states to follow their example, it was only under the seal of secresy that he disclosed, to the son of one of his accomplices, the part he had played in this great plot.† It was, in fact, difficult either to avow or to justify it; under pretence of defending the constitution he had committed a terrible assault upon it—the most terrible that it had ever yet received. By laying down the principle that the state legislatures had a right to veto the acts of Congress, he had introduced into the political law of America a doctrine subversive of all regular government, and which, in 1833, was near plunging the United States into anarchy. Fortunately it found but little favour in 1799. No state responded to the appeal of Kentucky and Virginia; several states even thought it their duty to protest against the new doctrine. Nevertheless, the Vice-President persisted in his opinion that it should be carried out to its full extent.‡ Less adventurous, because he was more face to face with the difficulty, Madison thought it better to blunt the edge of this revolutionary weapon, than to run the risk of wounding public opinion with it. In the reply he drew up § for Virginia, in answer to the objections made to the reso-

* November 1798.

† Ibid. vol. vii. p. 229; Letter to Nicholis, December 16, 1821.

‡ Ibid. vol. iv. p. 305; Letter to Nicholis, September 5, 1799

§ December 1799.

lutions of 1798, he laboured as much as possible to restrict their supposed scope; he particularly dwelt on the unconstitutional character of the *Sedition* and *Alien Acts*; he endeavoured to render them odious, without giving umbrage to conservative feeling. The wavering part of the public, which had been disquieted by Jefferson's resolutions, was gained over by Madison's report. Nothing could now preserve it from the intrigues of the opposition; nothing could any longer justify in its eyes the violent policy and the excessive extravagance of the administration. The country was no longer in danger.

Without consulting his cabinet any more than his party, John Adams had abruptly renewed pacific relations with France,* and had thus frozen the national excitement on this subject, the only strong public feeling at his disposal. By this conscientious but unseasonable act,† he disarmed the Federalist party, and accelerated its dissolution. It had begun to wane from the day when the inheritance of Washington's political power became common property. No one of his friends had been able to obtain possession of it. In becoming

* October 1799.

† ['He acted like a man out of his mind. Congress being on the point of opening, his cabinet recommended a paragraph in his speech to the effect that if France, disposed to conciliation, would send a representative, he would be received with the respect due to his position. To which Adams abruptly and indignantly replied, "that if France should send a minister to-morrow, he would send him back again;" and this, he declared, was his decision after mature reflection. Within forty-eight hours he intimated, in his speech, that if France would *receive* with respect a minister from America, he would send one; and immediately, without waiting for the reply to his communication, or even consulting his ministers, actually appointed an envoy to that country!'—*Hamilton's Works*, vol. vii. pp. 705, 707, 'Public Conduct and Character of John Adams.']

head of the state, John Adams had not become head of the Federalist staff. The cabinet bequeathed to him by his glorious predecessor had never admitted his authority. Hamilton looked upon him as incapable of governing, and his only consolation for seeing Adams at the head of affairs was the possibility of his being able to keep him in a state of tutelage by means of his own ministers. Though absent from Philadelphia, and apparently unconnected with the government, the late secretary of the treasury was secretly informed by them of everything, consulted by them on everything, and his opinion passed for law whenever the President did not impose his own by acting alone, or by a surprise. Hence, in the administration itself, continual intrigues and unexpected combinations—no mutual confidence, no settled plan of policy, no unity either of direction or action. For more than a year the American cabinet had been acting on a war policy, when the President took it upon himself to re-establish peace; this almost amounted to an act of desertion in the estimation of the Federal leaders, and though the bulk of the party continued to be warm supporters of Adams, though his name presented the best chances of success against Jefferson, they began to ask themselves if it would not be a sort of deception to return him a second time as President.

'The leading friends of the government are in a sad dilemma,' wrote Hamilton on the 5th of January, 1800. 'Shall they risk a serious schism by an attempt to change, or shall they annihilate themselves and hazard their cause by continuing to uphold those who suspect or hate them, and who are likely to pursue a course for no better reason than because it is contrary to that which they approve?' *

* Hamilton's Works, vol. vi. p. 416; Letter to King.

And on the 10th of May following he says:—

'For my individual part, my mind is made up. I will never more be responsible for him by my direct support, even though the consequence should be the election of *Jefferson*.' *

Had he supported Adams, the return of Jefferson would not have been less inevitable. The republican reaction defied all resistance. 'The question is not, I fear,' wrote Fisher Ames to Hamilton, 'how we shall fight, but how we and all Federalists shall fall—that we may fall like Antæus, the stronger for our fall.' †

The Federalists could not even manage to fall with dignity. Finding their cause lost, all they thought of was to indulge their caprices and their mutual dislikes, or to survive the death of their party; they shifted upon each other the responsibility of failure; they displayed their hidden sores before the public. Adams, in the most offensive manner, turned Hamilton's friends out of the cabinet; in conversation he denounced that gentleman as the leader of an English faction interested in embroiling the United States and France; he made a point of concentrating upon him all the insidious epithets which the opposition, without distinction of persons, had applied to all the supporters of the government: Hamilton retorted in a cutting pamphlet.‡

* Hamilton's Works, vol. vi. p. 441; Letter to Sedgwick.

† Ibid. vol. vi. p. 464; Ames to Hamilton, Aug. 26, 1800.

‡ 'The Public Conduct and Character of John Adams, Esq., President of the United States,' ibid. vol. vii. p. 687. [But it was not until Adams had obstinately refused to make any reply to Hamilton's desire to know if it were true that he was in the habit of speaking of him as one of 'a British faction.' Hamilton's second letter to him, after waiting in vain for two months an answer to his first, though restrained and dignified in its tone, was of a nature to compel any man of spirit and honour either to disavow the expressions attributed to him, or to avow them and take the consequences.



Already very much discredited by this pitiful recrimination, the Federalists completely lost themselves in public esteem, by attempting through an unfair manœuvre to frustrate the result of the election. As a matter of course, Adams was in the minority; but Colonel Burr, the candidate of the republicans for the vice-presidency, had received exactly the same number of votes as Jefferson, their candidate for the presidency. According to the constitution, it devolved upon the House of Representatives, voting by states, to determine which of the two candidates should be President—a question in this case doubtful in law, but not in equity. There could be no ambiguity about the intention of the electors; their purpose had obviously been to put Jefferson first, and Burr second. The House could not invert this order without abusing its power, and without doing violence to the feeling of the country; the Federalist party was not sufficiently strong in itself, nor sufficiently supported by the public, to compass it.* Bad feeling and bad calculation determined the Federalists to make the attempt. They desired to mortify Jefferson and gain over Burr, to spoil the triumph of their opponents, and by a juggle

Adams did neither. It was Franklin, if I recollect, who said of Adams, 'He was always honest, often wise, and sometimes mad.']

* [It does not seem that in a constitutional point of view this was an 'unfair manœuvre.' By the constitution the Federalists were in no sense bound by the intentions of the opposite party. Of the two candidates, they had a right — it was indeed their duty — to take advantage of the chance, and select the least objectionable. In the opinion of the majority each was fit to be President, since, whichever was chosen, the other in case of his demise would *ex officio* succeed him. With the majority it could only be a question of persons, with the Federalists it might be a question of principles. In point of fact, the latter thought Burr the least dangerous of the two. Of course at that time his real character was not known to either side.]

to turn it to their own profit. Colonel Burr was a military adventurer, overwhelmed with debts, and sunk in debauchery; a man of a supple and brilliant intellect, of an audacious and imperious temper, full of contempt for liberty, a courtier of the multitude, and who, as far back as 1792, had informed Hamilton that the overthrow of the republic had been dreamt of in the ranks of the republican party only, and that American demagogism had its Catiline.* It was a pure chimera to think of securing him; a conservative policy could not serve his purpose; the presidency would not satisfy his ambition. Hamilton vigorously opposed the support of such a man by his friends:—

'For heaven's sake let not the Federal party be responsible for the elevation of this man,' he wrote with sincere and patriotic alarm. 'If there be a man in the world I ought to hate, it is Jefferson. With Burr I have always been personally well. But the public good must be paramount to every private consideration. . . . . Burr will certainly attempt to reform the government *à la Buonaparte.* He is as unprincipled and dangerous a man as any country can boast—as true a Catiline as ever met in midnight conclave. . . . Should the party, by supporting Mr. Burr as President, adopt him for their official chief, I shall be obliged to consider myself as an *isolated* man. It will be impossible for me to reconcile with my notions of *honour* or policy the continuing to be of a party which, according to my apprehension, will have degraded myself and the country. . . . Perhaps myself the first, at some expense of popularity, to unfold the true character of Jefferson, it is too late for me to become his apologist, nor can I have any disposition to do it.

'I admit that his politics are tinctured with fanaticism; that he is too much in earnest in his democracy; that he has

* Hamilton's Works, vol. iv. p. 272; Letter to Washington, Aug. 18, 1792.



been a mischievous enemy to the principal measures of our past administration; that he is crafty and persevering in his objects; that he is not scrupulous about the means of success, nor very mindful of truth, and that he is a contemptible hypocrite.* But it is not true, as is alleged, that he is an enemy to the power of the executive, or that he is for confounding all the powers in the House of Representatives. It is a fact which I have frequently mentioned, that, while we were in the administration together, he was generally for a large construction of the executive authority, and not backward to act upon it in cases which coincided with his views. Let it be added that in his theoretic ideas he has considered as improper the participation of the Senate in the executive authority. I have more than once made the reflection *that, viewing himself as the reversioner, he was solicitous to come into the possession of a good estate.* Nor is it true that Jefferson is zealot enough to do anything in pursuance of his principles which will contravene his popularity or his interest. He is as likely as any man I know to temporize, to calculate what will be likely to promote his own reputation and advantage; and the probable result of such a temper is the preservation of systems, though originally opposed, which, being once established, could not be overturned without danger to the person who did it. To my mind, a true estimate of Mr. Jefferson's character warrants the expectation of a temporizing, rather than a violent system.' †

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* [Any writer who, in forming an estimate of Jefferson, ignores this terrible indictment, is not writing history. Either Hamilton is a slanderer, or Jefferson is what Hamilton describes him. No plea of unintentional misconception can be interposed; for Hamilton must have known exactly what Jefferson was.]

† Hamilton's Works, vol. vii. pp. 419, 453, 495, 499. [Hamilton adds: 'That Jefferson has manifested a culpable predilection for France is certainly true; but I think it a question whether it did not proceed quite as much from her popularity among us as from sentiment; and in proportion as that popularity is diminished his zeal will cool. Add to this, that there is no fair reason to suppose him capable of being corrupted, which is a security that he will not go beyond certain limits. It is not at all improbable that, under a change of cir-

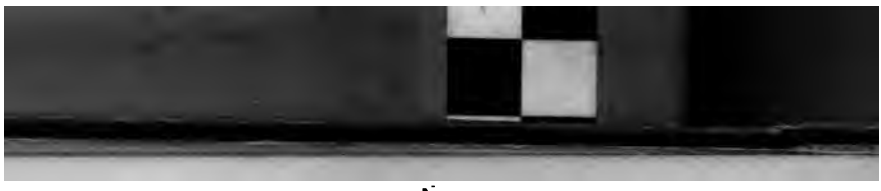
It was in vain. The Federalists would no longer listen to anyone. 'Some, indeed most, of our eastern friends are warm in support of the latter (Burr), and their pride is so much up about the change of influence that it is dangerous to quote an opinion,' wrote Gouverneur Morris to Hamilton. 'You, who are temperate in drinking, have never, perhaps, noticed the awkward situation of a man who continues sober after the company are drunk.' *

The ballot for deciding upon the choice of one of the two candidates began on February 11, 1801. The states were equally divided; thirty-five ballotings took place with the same result. For seven days the house was in session, presenting the most sombre aspect — the Federalists uneasy as to the wisdom of their proceedings, but obstinately bent on carrying out their mad project; the republicans ready to resort to arms against the abuse of privilege; the public at first astonished and struck with consternation, then speedily indignant. Weary of resistance, Burr's partisans finally gave way, but too late to remove the bad impression caused by their opposition to the national will. On the thirty-sixth ballot three of them stayed away, and Jefferson was declared President February 17, 1801.

The Federalist party had fallen, never to rise again. Neither the ability of its opponents, nor its own mistakes, nor the exhaustion of its strength consequent upon the formidable assaults to which it had been exposed, nor yet the dissensions among its leaders after the retirement of the great man around whom it had clustered, suffice to explain its final defeat. A more

cumstances, Jefferson's Gallicism has greatly abated.' This evidence to Jefferson's incorruptibility it is, perhaps, fair to add.]

* Hamilton's Works, p. 504.



deeply-seated cause of weakness sentenced it to perish. It was not in unison with the nation; public feeling did not naturally flow in its direction. Its authority had never been admitted, save by an effort of reason, under the pressure of necessity, and at the instance of Washington. In order to found the Federal government, and pass safely through the crisis caused by the French revolution, the American democratic party had felt how imperative it was to confide its interests to the control of the most honourable and able men; but the government once settled, the danger past, and Washington no more, it had yielded to its instincts; its wise counsellors had been made to give way to more obsequious and acceptable friends; it had transferred the sceptre to its flatterers and favourites. The Federalists revolted them by their superiority of intelligence, often shown in a way a little too overbearing; by their almost European appreciation of the dignity of power, and the homage due to the state; by their passion for order and discipline; by what, in fact, might be termed their desire for a surplusage of good government. The tastes of American democracy were much less elevated and refined; to get near to what it wished was enough for its coarse intelligence; it felt both hampered and humiliated by all this prodigal anxiety for the public good. Hamilton himself acknowledged that his party had 'erred in relying so much on the rectitude and utility of their measures as to have neglected the cultivation of popular favour by fair and justifiable expedients;'* but he at the same time confessed his inaptness to play the part of courtier to the masses: —

'Mine is an odd destiny. Perhaps no man in the United

* Hamilton's Works, vol. vi. p. 540; Letter to Bayard, April 1802.



States has sacrificed or done more for the present constitution than myself, and, contrary to all my anticipations of its fate, as you know from the very beginning, I am still labouring to prop the frail and worthless fabric. Yet I have the murmurs of its friends no less than the curses of its foes for my reward. What can I do better than withdraw from the scene? Every day proves to me more and more that this American world was not made for me.'*

Hamilton was more afflicted than surprised at this triumph of the democratic party. In his eyes the natural play of American institutions must necessarily cast up into power those who were likely to make it subservient to the passions of the multitude. He had never believed in the success of the great experiment yet under trial in his adopted country. Never yet had a democratic republic been attempted on so vast a scale. It seemed to him also impossible that the various populations of this immense empire could simultaneously pursue the course prescribed by reason; and, in the absence of any permanent power, of any authority independent of popular caprice, that the government could discharge its functions and retain sufficient strength to resist its masters, to protect them from their own evil inclinations, to prevent their dividing, quarrelling, fighting; in a word, to save North America from that scourge which has become the chronic malady of South America — social war within its states, and civil war between them. The danger was evidently not so great nor the calamity so imminent as Hamilton

* Hamilton's Works, vol. vi. p. 530; Letter to Gouverneur Morris, Feb. 27, 1802. [Hamilton was right. It was in England that his great qualities and talents would have obtained their brilliant and just reward. He loved her as the great exemplar of political and civil liberty. Time has shown how well and wisely he bestowed his love.]



fancied; his melancholy predictions as to the fate of the American constitution have not been realized. The democratic republic of North America has found an element of stability precisely in that division of the country into distinct states, and in that gigantic extent of its territory, which so much alarmed some of its founders.

But was Hamilton wrong in doubting the duration of his own work? The future will one day say.* Jefferson himself at times threw an uneasy glance into the distance. He who boasted, if not of having effected, at least of having desired, the pacific revolution of 1801, which had given free vent to the instincts of the country, one day complained to M. Correa de Serra, the Portuguese Minister to the United States, of the resistless force of the democratic torrent, which no dyke was now strong enough to confine. 'What a pity you did not stop up the gap by which you passed!' was the ironical reply.

* [The future has replied with fearful promptness. Since this work was published (1861) Hamilton's predictions have been verified. The Federal Union is in ruins! The work of Washington, Franklin, Hamilton, Jay and Madison is broken asunder, and smeared and smoking with blood!]



CHAPTER IX.

1801—1805.

JEFFERSON'S FIRST PRESIDENCY — INTENDS TO BE VERY CONCILIATORY — REMOVALS FROM OFFICE ON A LARGE SCALE — HELPLESSNESS OF THE OPPOSITION — DISCONTINUANCE OF INTERNAL TAXATION; REDUCTION OF ARMY AND NAVY — ACQUISITION OF LOUISIANA — PROGRESS OF RADICALISM IN THE UNITED STATES — JEFFERSON'S HATRED OF THE CLERGY AND MAGISTRACY — IMPEACHMENT OF JUDGE CHASE — PROSECUTIONS AGAINST THE PRESS — HAMILTON IS KILLED IN A DUEL BY COLONEL BURR — JEFFERSON IS RE-ELECTED BY AN IMMENSE MAJORITY — A NAVY WITHOUT SAILORS SHUT UP IN A PORT WITHOUT WATER.

'I AM well,' said Washington, towards the close of his life, 'because I sleep well, and I sleep well because I have never written a line without figuring to myself that I saw it in print.' Jefferson was not quite so circumspect. He had a great fear of the public, but he persuaded himself a little too easily that he could screen himself from its observation. As long as he felt he was under the superintendence of public opinion, he wrote and talked with an infinity of reason, ability, and moderation, but when he fancied himself well concealed from observation, when he had urgently pressed on his correspondents the necessity of secresy, he gave vent to his imagination and passion in language singularly indiscreet. He recklessly threw upon paper whatever came into his head, without much respect for the intelligence of his readers, and without much care about



the effect of his words; his friends passed them on in a whisper, the one to the other; in the end his adversaries got wind of them, and Jefferson was then highly indignant at finding the Federalists citing against him some of his secret crotchets, taking his theories in earnest, and confounding them with his policy. He insisted on being judged by his acts only. It was no doubt unquestionably true that it had occurred to him to lay down as a principle that the state might lawfully declare itself bankrupt every nineteen years, and to affirm that, like the Chinese, the Americans should shut themselves up at home, and abstain from maritime commerce; true it was too he had pushed his partiality for France so far as to excuse the massacres of September, and his hatred for Great Britain to such a point as to desire the rupture of all commercial ties between her and the United States.* But then he had never opposed the payment of the national debt; he had often supported in Paris, as well as in Philadelphia, the interests of American navigation; he had always faithfully carried out the neutral policy under Washington, and he had never caused anyone to be massacred. But all this did not at all remove the fears of the Federalists; and when a majority of the nation indicated Jefferson for the Presidency, they shuddered at the idea of the government of the country passing into the hands of a fanatical visionary, the advocate of bankruptcy, the enemy of commerce, a mad admirer of the French, a bitter enemy of England, and a Jacobin. A little fact, which Jefferson himself tells us of, shows plainly enough how sincere their objections to him were.

* [Even the conquest of England by the French was, as we have seen, one of his agreeable speculations.]



It occurred in the month of February 1801. The House of Representatives were still determining which of the two candidates for the Presidency should be selected. The Federalists, by their persisting to support Burr, made it impossible to come to a decision, and were thinking, so it is said, of conferring the power on a temporary president of the senate in the event of their being able to prevent a regular election. Jefferson, in consequence, paid a visit to President Adams to beseech him to oppose his veto to an act of usurpation which might lead to civil war. Adams received him very ungraciously: —

'Sir,' he said with vehemence, 'the event of the election is within your own power. You have only to say that you will do justice to the public creditors, maintain the navy, and not disturb those holding offices, and the government will be instantly put into your hands.'—'Mr. Adams,' said I, 'I know not what part of my conduct, in either private or public life, can have authorized a doubt of my fidelity to the public engagements. I say, however, I will not come into the government by capitulation; I will not enter on it but in perfect freedom to follow the dictates of my own judgement.' . . . 'Then,' said he, 'things must take their course.'*

And they parted in anger — Jefferson enraged because the President refused to understand his hint, John Adams indignant at not having received a formal promise.

Even after finding that they could no longer, without losing themselves in the opinion of their own party, prolong their resistance to the wish of the nation, the Federal representatives would not surrender without giving Jefferson a last mark of their implacable

* Jefferson's Works, vol. v. p. 561; Letter to Dr. Benjamin Rush, January 16, 1801.

hostility; they voted at the final ballot in mass against him, with the exception of three, who it had been arranged were to stay away in order to give him a bare majority.* 'We consider this, therefore, as a declaration of war on the part of this band,'† wrote Jefferson to Madison the next day. He anticipated the war with more uneasiness than enthusiasm. Hamilton was not wrong when, endeavouring to restrain the violence of his friends against his rival, he had given them to understand that the character of this pretended fanatic betokened a temporizing and not a violent policy. Jefferson himself had said, 'I have no passion which would lead me to delight to ride in a storm.'‡

From the instant he found himself on the point of succeeding through a policy of agitation, he had, in the very midst of his own party, declared himself in favour of a conciliatory policy. He was perfectly well aware that the forces which enable democrats to obtain power are not always sufficient to secure it to them. He desired to enlarge his basis of operations without materially altering it; he desired, without discontenting his friends, to rally around him that mass of honest persons, earnest in their wishes for the public good, who still habitually sided with the Federalists as the acknowledged defenders of order, but who were beginning to have doubts of their wisdom and their patriotism since, by their manœuvres to prevent the election of their most formidable adversary, they had nearly thrown the country into confusion.

* February 17, 1801.

† Jefferson's Works, vol. iv. p. 355; Letter to Madison, February 18, 1801.

‡ Ibid. vol. iv. p. 152; Letter to Edward Rutledge, December 27, 1790.



'The course pursued by the heads of the Federal party, appears,' says Jefferson, 'to have brought over to us the great body of their followers, who, being alarmed with the danger of the dissolution of the government, had been made most anxiously to wish the very administration they had opposed, and to view it when obtained as a child of their own. . . . I am persuaded that weeks of ill-judged conduct have strengthened us more than years of prudent and conciliatory administration could have done. Our former adversaries,' he continues, 'are in a state of mind to be consolidated with us if no intemperate measures on our part revolt them again. . . . Mr. Adams embarrasses us.'*

In fact, John Adams was putting the moderation of the Republican party to a severe test. He made use of the few days still remaining to him as President to appoint to all vacant places the most violent enemies of his successor; thus perfidiously preparing for him the disagreeable dilemma either of respecting these appointments at the risk of being ill served, and discontenting the place-hunters who were hanging on his success, or of opening his administration by a general clearing-out of all public offices on such a scale as was likely to revolt the new converts and give a body to leaders who now stood alone.†

Three days after entering upon office, Jefferson wrote to Munroe to this effect: —

'Some deprivations, I know, must be made. There must be as few as possible, done gradually, and bottomed on some malversation or inherent disqualification. Where we shall draw the line between retaining all or none, is not yet settled, and will not be until we get our administration together; and perhaps even then we shall proceed *à tatons*,

* Jefferson's Works, vol. iv. pp. 355, 361, 356.

† Ibid. vol. iv. p. 368; Letter to Colonel Munroe, March 7, 1801.



balancing our measures according to the impression we perceive them to make.'*

The inaugural address of the new President was his first attempt at sounding public feeling. It was prodigal of the most prudent advice to the Republicans, and of the most winning language to the Federalists:—

'All, too,' he said, 'will bear in mind this sacred principle, that though the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail, that will, to be rightful, must be reasonable; that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal laws must protect, and to violate which would be oppression. Let us, then, fellow-citizens, unite with one heart and one mind. . . . Every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle. We are called by different names brethren of the same principles. We are all Republicans — we are Federalists.'†

The Republicans were disappointed; the Federalists continued distrustful. The latter were right not to put too much trust in the fair words of the President. It is never possible to rely on the promises, even when most sincere, of those who plume themselves 'on being democrats by temperament.' Such persons are not their own masters; their principle as well as habit is to be obedient to those they command. Jefferson had not sufficient firmness to be as conciliatory as he intended. All the appointments, capable of being cancelled, which were made during the last few days of Adams's presidency, were considered by the new administration as of no effect; and even many public officers more unexceptionally appointed were also turned out. In every state the number of removals from office was nicely proportioned to the wants of the Republicans in it.‡ The

* Jefferson's Works, vol. iv. p. 368; Letter to Colonel Munroe, March 7, 1801.

† Ibid. vol. viii. p. 2.

‡ Ibid. vol. iv. p. 414.



President felt greatly comforted when he saw 'the terrible operation,' * to which he had consented not without repugnance, brought to a close, without producing too ill an impression on the public. To satisfy the victors there was yet one measure of a more serious nature to be taken, which troubled Jefferson much less, because the responsibility of it must devolve on Congress. In pursuance of a bill passed the last session, twenty new judicial appointments had been made, and Adams had lost no time in bestowing them upon his friends. The irremovability of the Federal magistracy being guaranteed by the constitution, it had at first struck Jefferson as very difficult 'to undo what had been done;' † but he did not halt long at these constitutional obstacles. In order to surmount them, all that was required was to find a majority disposed to forget, just for one instant, 'the sacred principle' that its omnipotence is limited by law. The law was violated, but by means of an evasion. The judges appointed by John Adams were not deprived; Congress merely nullified their duties by repealing the Act which had created the new judicial seats.

This exertion of power on the part of the majority appeared almost natural to the country, so unpopular had the Federalists become. They were every day losing their influence, even in those states where they still preserved their ascendency. In vain did their newspapers borrow from the late Republican press the bitterness and vulgarity of its language — they were appealing to readers who had been surfeited in this way. The public was tired of the great struggles in which it had engaged under the presidencies of

* Jefferson's Works, vol. iv. p. 406.

† Ibid. vol. iv. pp. 344, 370.



Washington and Adams. Even the old rivalry between the North and the South, which had so long fomented party disputes, seemed about to expire. Discussions on principles were no longer capable of exciting public opinion, and no great question of interest at that time divided the various *economical* subdivisions of the United States. The opposition was without a lever whereby to stir up public feeling. It had been beaten in 1801, in the election for members of Congress, as in the election for the Presidency; it had yet to expect fresh defeats. 'Our majority in the House of Representatives,' wrote Jefferson to Mr. Barlow, in May 1802, 'has been about two to one; in the Senate, eighteen to fifteen. After another election it will be of two to one in the Senate; and it would not be for the public good to have it greater. A respectable minority is useful as censors. . . . We shall now be so strong that we shall certainly split again.'*

But what use was the President going to make of all this force? What great innovations was he to introduce into the working of the American government, in order to justify that name of revolution which he applied to his accession to power? Let him reply himself to this question.

'I am sensible,' he says, writing to Dr. W. Jones, 'how far I should fall short of effecting all the reformation that reason would suggest, and experience approve, were I free to do whatever I thought best; but when we reflect how difficult it is to move or inflect the great machine of society, how impossible to advance the notions of a whole people suddenly to an idea of right, we see the wisdom of Solon's remark, that no more good must be attempted than the nation can

* Jefferson's Works, vol. iv. p. 437; Letter to Barlow, May 3, 1802.



bear, and that all will be chiefly to reform any waste of public money, and thus drive away the vultures who prey upon it, and improve some little on old routines.'*

To retrench—such then was pretty nearly the whole programme of Jefferson, one very modest in appearance, but, in fact, of very dangerous import to the country. The work of the Federalists had not by any means fallen into the same discredit as their persons; it survived their influence, and Jefferson felt neither able nor disposed to attack it openly. He could neither overthrow the institutions which his predecessors had created, nor invent any foreign policy differing from that policy of neutrality which they had adopted; but he could weaken the government transmitted to him, and suffer the United States to lose the means of causing their neutrality to be respected and of protecting their interests. All the evil which he could do, he did, in order to obey democratic principles, in order to court the favour of the taxpayers, and to cripple his enemies. The preponderance of the executive power appeared to him to be dangerous to the sovereignty of the people; he desired to disarm 'executive patronage and preponderance, by putting down one half the offices of the United States, which are no longer necessary.'†

The army and navy were still commanded by officers devoted to Washington's policy and that of his friends. There was here, therefore, a hostile group which, through the least foreign complication, might acquire more importance. Jefferson's object was, by a combined system of peace and economy at any price, 'to sink Federalism

* Jefferson's Works, vol. iv. p. 392; March 31, 1801.

† Ibid. vol. iv. p. 430; Letter to General Kosciusko, April 2, 1802.



into an abyss from which there shall be no resurrection for it.' *

He very properly saw the necessity of maintaining a complete unison between the nation and its leaders. He was aware that there were only two ways in which the executive could effect this result; it must either act on the country or be acted on by it, either energetically use all the lawful means of influence at the government's disposal, and multiply institutions and functions which give it a hold upon public opinion, or else accept the yoke of the public. Jefferson neglected the first of these political expedients as little republican or safe; he was, therefore, reduced to take popular feeling for his guide, to govern as he might have done if he were neither more far-sighted nor better informed than the first taxpayer who came in his way.

At the moment when, on the President's recommendation, Congress had decided on removing internal taxation and reducing the army and navy, the American government knew perfectly well that the event, in anticipation of which it had been Washington's object to strengthen his country with a good fleet and a good army, was on the point of being realized,† that France was preparing to take possession of Louisiana, in pursuance of a secret treaty concluded at Madrid on October 1, 1800, and that this change of neighbours, apparently so indifferent, might cause a 'hurricane' sufficiently violent to upset the whole foreign policy of the United States. It was soon made known that the Spanish governor of Louisiana had abruptly suspended the right of a deposit at the mouth of the Mississippi, secured to the United

* Jefferson's Works, vol. iv. p. 451; Letter to Levi Lincoln, October 25, 1802.

† Washington's Writings, vol. xi. p. 351.



States by Spain. Right or wrong, the public attributed this decision to the influence of the French government, and saw in it an intimation that the definitive suppression of a bonding port entered into the views of the First Consul. The western people, who regarded the maintenance of this right as the essential condition of their prosperity, displayed the liveliest indignation. Jefferson immediately assumed in his conversation a tone hostile to France.

'Yet we are told,' wrote Hamilton, 'that the President, in conversation, is very stout. The great embarrassment must be how to carry on the war without taxes. The pretty scheme of substituting economy to taxation will not do here. And a war would be a terrible comment upon the abandonment of the internal revenue. Yet how is popularity to be preserved with the western partisans, if their interests are tamely sacrificed?' *

Jefferson did not desire to expose his country lightly to the hazards of war; and he was right. But he desired to draw the attention of the First Consul to the importance which the United States attached to there being no change of neighbours, and to the dangers which their enmity might draw down upon France; he attempted to induce General Bonaparte, if not completely to give up all idea of Louisiana, at all events to sell New Orleans and the Floridas to the United States, the possession of which could alone secure the western people the free navigation of the Mississippi; he had therefore been wrong in disarming, for to disarm was to deprive the democratic party of one of its strongest arguments. Accordingly, it was in vain that Mr. Livingstone, the United States minister at Paris, strove to

* Hamilton's Works, vol. vi. p. 551; Letter to General C. C. Pinckney, December 29, 1802.



alarm the French government, and to obtain from it some explanation of its views respecting Louisiana. The First Consul appeared to take no more account of the United States than if they did not exist, a contempt, unquestionably the most extravagant and short-sighted, which can alone explain how it was he could have again revived the obsolete scheme of founding an empire beyond the ocean. The day when France determined to second the emancipation of the English colonies, and to create a powerful ally in the New World, she virtually renounced the notion of establishing her own dominion in those distant countries; she had knowingly abandoned America to those rivals, whom it was her object to raise up in opposition to Great Britain. To occupy regions, therefore, on which they had for a long while had their eye, to bar their passage towards the south, to shut them up in limits which the force of things must compel them to break, was to destroy the work of Louis XVI., to create a factitious antagonism between nations naturally friendly, to interest the United States in the humiliation of France, and to compel them to throw themselves into the arms of Great Britain.

'There is on the globe one single spot,' wrote Jefferson to Livingstone, 'the possessor of which is our natural and habitual enemy. It is New Orleans, through which the produce of three-eighths of our territory must pass to market, and from its fertility it will ere long yield more than half of our whole produce, and contain more than half of our inhabitants. France, placing herself in that door, assumes to us the attitude of defiance. Spain might have retained it quietly for years. Her pacific dispositions, her feeble state, would induce her to increase our facilities there, so that her possession of the place would be hardly felt by us, and it would not, perhaps, be very long before some circumstance might arise,



which might make the cession of it to us the price of something of more worth to her. Not so can it ever be in the hands of France; the impetuosity of her temper, the energy and restlessness of her character, placed in a point of eternal friction with us, and our character, which, though quiet and loving peace and the pursuit of wealth, is high-minded, despising wealth in competition with insult or injury, enterprising and energetic as any nation on earth; these circumstances render it impossible that France and the United States can continue long friends when they meet in so irritable a position. They, as well as we, must be blind if they do not see this; and we must be very improvident if we do not begin to make arrangements on that hypothesis. The day that France takes possession of New Orleans fixes the sentence which is to restrain her for ever within her low-water mark. It seals the union of two nations, who, in conjunction, can maintain exclusive possession of the ocean. From that moment we must marry ourselves to the British fleet and nation.'*

Such were the feelings inspired in the leader of the *Gallomen* † by the projects of General Bonaparte. In Paris there were many reasonable people who were sorry to see the First Consul plunging into this wild and dangerous adventure; but every one carefully avoided crossing the master's idea by endeavouring to enlighten it. Hence the only thing which Mr. Livingstone could now hope for was some new European caprice of Bonaparte's, which would supplant his American folly:—

'There never was a government in which less could be done by negotiation than here,' he writes. 'There is no people, no legislature, no counsellors. One man is everything. He seldom asks advice, and never hears it unasked. His ministers are mere clerks, and his legislature and counsellors parade officers. Though the sense of any reflecting man is against this wild expedition, no one dares tell him so.

* Jefferson's Works, vol. iv. p. 432.

† Ibid. vol. iv. p. 431; April 18, 1802.

Were it not for the uneasiness it excites at home, it would give me none, for I am persuaded that the whole will end in a relinquishment of the country, and the transfer of the capital to the United States. Their islands call for much more than France can ever furnish. The extreme hauteur of this government to all around them will not suffer peace to be of long continuance.'*

On his side Jefferson had lost almost all confidence in the efficacy of negotiation; but, for his country, as well as for himself, he thought it useful to gain time. In reality, he was expecting a violent issue, but he desired to put it off 'till a population should be planted on the Mississippi itself sufficient to do its own work, without marching men fifteen hundred miles from the American shores, to perish by fatigue and unfriendly climates;'† and, also, in order to spare the Republican party the shame of being obliged to acknowledge the emptiness of its declamation on the advantages of disarming, and on the inexpediency of taxation. Be this as it may, in order to stop the opposition's mouth, and keep the western people quiet, it was necessary, 'by a sensible act,'‡ in the place of 'invisible measures,' and by some significative official step, to give them reason to believe the head of the state was actively employed in defending the great national interests intrusted to his safe keeping. An ambassador (Mr. Munroe) was therefore sent with much display to France, instructed to negotiate, in conjunction with Mr. Livingstone, for the purchase of New Orleans and Florida. He had the singular good fortune of

* American State Papers, vol. ii. p. 525; Livingstone to the Secretary of State, September 1, 1802.

† Jefferson's Works, vol. iv. pp. 483, 525.

‡ Ibid. vol. iv. p. 454; Letter to Munroe, January 13, 1803.



reaching Paris on the eve of the rupture of the peace of Amiens. Mr. Livingstone had already very skilfully availed himself of the menacing attitude of Great Britain towards France to get himself listened to at the Tuileries. By the intervention of Joseph Bonaparte, he had succeeded in laying before the First Consul several communications of a nature to enlighten him as to the very little profit France would derive from her new possessions in the Gulf of Mexico, and of the difficulty of defending them at once against the Americans and the English. The colonial dreams of Bonaparte had suddenly vanished into air, and, contrary to all Jefferson's anticipations, he made up his mind to the immediate cession of the whole of Louisiana to the United States. On April 30, 1803, less than twenty days after Mr. Munroe's arrival, the treaty was concluded. Though not empowered by their instructions, the American negotiators did not, it will be easily conceived, hesitate to give 80,000,000f. in exchange for a dominion, the area of which exceeded 1,000,000 square miles.*

In vain did the Federalists insist that Jefferson was not entitled to any merit for this marvellous triumph of his diplomacy — he reaped all its glory. In vain did they reproach him with having permitted himself to push this undeserved success too far; with having, by thus accepting from fortune too vast a gift, included a territory within the limits of the confederation which, by the force of things, would be one day led to separate itself from the Atlantic States, after having thinned

* Of the 80,000,000f. paid for Louisiana, only sixty found their way into the French Exchequer; the other twenty were devoted to paying off the claims of American citizens on France, for illegal seizures made by the French navy during the late war.



their population to increase its own. The public, intoxicated with joy, cared very little about these distant possibilities, which made more impression upon the mind of Jefferson, while depressing it as little.

'Besides,' wrote he, 'if it should become the great interest of those nations to separate from this, if their happiness should depend on it so strongly as to induce them to go through that convulsion, why should the Atlantic states dread it? But, especially, why should we, their present inhabitants, take side in such a question? . . . . The future inhabitants of the Atlantic and Mississippi States will be our sons. We leave them in distinct but bordering establishments. We think we see their happiness in their union, and we wish it. Events may prove it otherwise; and if they see their interest in separation, why should we take side with our Atlantic rather than our Mississippi descendants? It is the elder and the younger son differing. God bless them both, and keep them in union, if it be for their good, but separate them if it be better.'*

Jefferson evidently felt himself under no obligation to extend to the French of Louisiana this paternal indulgence for the various wants and inclinations of the different members of the American family; in spite of the so much boasted elasticity of the Federal bond, the creoles were compelled to abandon their hereditary usages. Before becoming citizens of the United States, they were sentenced to pass under the Anglo-Saxon roller, and thus to lose every trace of their original character. Under the government of the apostle of states' rights, they became the victims of a rage for uniformity. When they desired to resist the introduction of the English language into the administration of justice at New Orleans — when they wished to avail

* Jefferson's Works, vol. iv. p. 499; Letter to Brackenridge, August 12, 1803.



themselves of a majority in the Assembly of the new territory to confer upon themselves a civil code in harmony with their manners, their acts were violently annulled; and Jefferson, displeased at their wish to preserve these distinctive features of their nationality in the midst of their future confederates, wrote these characteristic and forbidding words:—

'I propose to the members of Congress, in conversation, the enlisting 30,000 volunteers, Americans by birth, to be carried at the public expense, and settled immediately on a bounty of 160 acres of land each, on the west side of the Mississippi, on the condition of giving two years of military service, if that country should be attacked within seven years. The defence of the country would thus be placed on the spot, and the additional numbers would entitle the territory to become a state, would make the majority Americans, and make it an American instead of a French state. This would not sweeten the pill to the French; but, in making that acquisition, we had some view to our own good as well as theirs, and, I believe, the greatest good of both will be promoted by whatever will amalgamate us together.'*

Nothing henceforth could restrain the natural impetuosity of the American race. The defeat of the Federalist party, and the cession of Louisiana by the First Consul, had destroyed the only barriers capable of resisting the violent expansion of its passions and its strength. It was hereafter to be helplessly a prey to every temptation of its aggressive and democratic spirit. The Federal government seemed solely intent on anticipating its wishes, and on stripping itself of all capacity of resisting them. The State governments were impoverishing themselves in the same way as the Federal government. In 1801, the State of New York

* Jefferson's Works, vol. v. p. 30; Letter to John Dickenson, January 13, 1807.



modified its constitution for the purpose of diminishing the prerogatives of the governor. In 1802, Maryland amended its constitution for the purpose of instituting universal suffrage in the place of qualified suffrage, which was at that time the usual form in the United States. In 1803, the territory of Ohio, admitted into the Union as a state, and having the privilege of framing its own laws, broke through what was then the common practice in America, of appointing judges for life, and adopted that of making them removable at fixed periods. In all the states where the ministers of religion had until now received a public and fixed allowance, which placed them above the caprices of the crowd, by giving them means of subsistence independent of the voluntary contributions of their parishioners, numerous and eager sectarians formed a coalition with the free-thinkers amongst the democrats, for the purpose of bringing about a final separation between Church and State, which must one day enfeeble both the one and the other.* To submit the governing to the yoke of the governed, judges to that of their suitors, pastors to that of their flocks; to suppress every office independent of the mass — such was the tendency which, to Jefferson's great joy, was

* The constitution of the United States, when refusing Congress the right to make laws 'respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' had in no way prejudged the question of the relations between Church and State in other parts of the Union. The object of the constitution was simply to declare the Federal legislature incompetent in religious matters, and to leave all questions of this nature to the decision of the State legislatures. In the South, the system of voluntary contributions was at once adopted; in the North, on the contrary, the practice of making an allowance by the State for religious purposes was continued for several years.



every day manifesting itself more and more throughout the Union; and yet it was an old opinion of his, that the more the aim of restricting the interference of the Federal government in the domestic affairs of the country was successfully carried out, the greater was the necessity of strengthening the State governments, and of placing them in the hands of the natural leaders of the nation. On his return from Paris, he had even sketched out the plan of a general reform, in a sense precisely the reverse of that which was about to be effected in his own presidency:—

'To obtain a wise and able government,' said Jefferson, writing to Short, on Dec. 23, 1791, 'I consider the following changes as important:—Render the legislature a desirable station by lessening the number of representatives (say to 100) and lengthening somewhat their term, and proportion them equally among the electors. Adopt also a better mode of appointing senators. Render the executive a more desirable post to men of abilities by making it more independent of the legislature. . . . Render the judiciary respectable by every possible means, to wit, firm tenure in office, competent salaries, and reduction of numbers.' *

Public opinion had proceeded in an entirely opposite direction, and Jefferson had followed it. In doing so, he but yielded to the natural bias of his ideas and position. The principle of popular sovereignty very soon leads to a negation of the lawfulness of all independent functions, the exercise of the supreme power very easily bringing short-sighted politicians to deny their utility, and to regard them as nothing better than obstructions. In his double capacity of democrat and governor, the President would, therefore, not be

* Jefferson's Works, vol. iii. p. 315. [He adds: 'This branch of the government will have the weight of the conflict on their hands, because they will be the last resort of reason.']



over-partial to their preservation; but, to obliterate all means of resistance to the will of the masses, was not this identical with the obliteration of all means of resistance to the action of the government, which was nothing more than the servant of this will?

Besides, Jefferson had reason to regard all life-holding public officers, whether Federal or State, whether judges or priests, as the natural enemies of his administration. Formed under his predecessors, the judicial body generally remained faithful to Federal principles, and made it a point of honour to distinguish itself from other public bodies by its conservative tendencies, its somewhat unbending character, and its haughty demeanour. On the other hand, the ministers of the churches, established in New England, educated amid Puritan traditions, accustomed to control public opinion with austere independence, felt and showed, in general, but little indulgence for the political and philosophical license of the democratic party. Against Jefferson in particular they had the most serious grounds of complaint; they openly reproached him with his notorious impiety, his hostility to endowments and all ecclesiastical appropriations, and with his successful efforts in procuring their abolition in the Southern States. The charges of the judges at the assizes, and the sermons of the preachers in the pulpits, broke in most discordantly, at times, upon the chorus of adulation of which the President was the object. To find himself ranked by certain preachers below the most wicked of the kings of Israel, after being elevated by certain flatterers to a level with the Messiah — this was a trifle irritating. Jefferson was not pleased at being compared to Jeroboam, and, in his rage at the attacks of the clergy, he was so far carried away by his feelings as to



appropriate to himself the parallel, revolting as ridiculous, drawn in his honour by a young republican lawyer, between 'the illustrious chief who, once insulted, now presides over the Union, and Him who, once insulted, now presides over the Universe.' *

'From the clergy,' exclaimed the President, 'I expect no mercy. They crucified their Saviour, who preached that their kingdom was not of this world; and all who practise on that precept must expect the extreme of their wrath.'† And in order to punish them, not content with insidiously commenting on this pretended precept of ecclesiastical organization in his confidential conversations and private correspondence, he even went so far as to break through the official reserve which the constitution prescribes to the Federal government upon all religious questions. In reply to an address from the Baptists of Connecticut, he officially expressed a desire that their doctrines, touching the relations between Church and State, might become articles of faith in every spot which still rejected them. ‡

The Democratic party had made up its mind to retaliate upon the Federalist judges, who were turning against it the old judicial practice and privilege of introducing political matter into their charges to grand juries. In order to avenge these attacks, for which there was no legal remedy, it became necessary to resort to the most paltry and equivocating expedients. The President of the Court of Common Pleas in the western district of

* Hildreth's History of the United States, second series, vol. ii. p. 430.

† Jefferson's Works, vol. iv. p. 407; Letter to Levi Lincoln, August 26, 1801.

‡ Ibid. vol. viii. p. 113.



Pennsylvania, Mr. Addison, was impeached in the State Assembly, not for speaking upon political questions from the bench, but for refusing one of his fellow-judges of the Democratic party permission to reply on the spot to one of his philippics. He was sentenced to deprivation by the Senate. Similar proceedings took place, almost at the same time, against three other Pennsylvania magistrates. Fired by these examples, the Federal House of Representatives impeached Mr. Chase, a judge of the Supreme Court, and a venerable veteran in the cause of independence, a little too much in the habit of introducing the strong feelings of his early years into the administration of justice, but whose principal crime was being one of the most determined opponents of the administration. He was acquitted by the Senate, to the great mortification of the Democrats, who hoped, by proceedings of this kind, indirectly to abrogate the guarantee, by which the constitution secures the independence of the judges. In their fury against the Senate's decision, they could not even conceal that such had been the spirit and object of their attack upon Judge Chase. No sooner was he acquitted, than Mr. John Randolph rose to propose an amendment to the constitution, by which the legislature would have acquired the right of summarily superseding the 'judiciary.' The motion was carried by a majority of sixty-eight against thirty-three; but, in spite of this first success, it eventually fell to the ground.

The oppressive humour of the ancient champions of unlimited liberty exhibited itself at the same time in violent attacks upon the press. At Philadelphia the editor of a paper, Mr. Dennie, was prosecuted for an article exhibiting the essential vices of democracy. In



Albany, a Federalist printer was brought to trial, on an ex-officio information filed by the Attorney-General of the State of New York, for affirming that Jefferson had Callender, the pamphleteer, in his pay during Adams's administration. It was General Hamilton, now returned to the bar, who, on behalf of the defendant, undertook to defend the liberty of the press thus called in question by the Democrats; the closing act of this great citizen's life, of him so often accused of wishing to set up monarchy, and who died for having put his party on its guard against the only man in the United States that had ever dreamt of overthrowing the republic. In 1804, when Burr aspired to the office of governor of the State of New York, just as in 1801, when he aimed at supplanting Jefferson in the Presidency of the United States, this dangerous adventurer had found the way closed against him by the character which his high-minded censor had drawn of him, and had succumbed under the weight of public scorn. It is asserted that he spent three months in pistol practice before calling out the brave and honourable man whom he had marked out for vengeance. Hamilton had just lost his eldest son in a political duel, and had thus more than ever a horror of this brutal method of settling party quarrels. After vainly offering his adversary the frankest explanations in order to avoid the duel, he, before going to the place of rendezvous, committed to paper his intention to receive Burr's fire without returning it. At the first shot he fell mortally wounded in the right side, and he died twenty-four hours afterwards, amid the consternation of the public.* There was a burst of indignation throughout the United States against the wretched

* July 12, 1804.

intriguer who, after sacrificing to what he dared to call his honour the noblest servant of the country, laughingly excused himself, it is said, to the young debauchees in whose society he usually lived, for not having shot his victim through the heart.*

Jefferson thus, at one blow, found himself rid of the

* [It is now fifty-eight years since I, who write this note, walked among the mourners in the funeral procession which accompanied the general's remains through the afflicted and exasperated city. Though barely six years of age at the time, I still remember the streets and windows crowded with sombre-looking, sorrowing men, and weeping women. I have also a faint impression of standing on the steps of Trinity Church and looking up at the stately figure of Gouverneur Morris as he pronounced the funeral eulogy. But what is still as fresh in my memory as if of yesterday, is the mournful sound of the military salute over the brave and true man's grave. One other circumstance connected with him is clear in my mind. Not very long before his death he had driven me down to his country seat, the Grange, taking great pains to amuse me on the way, and promising to give me a notion of war; which, however, I remember his saying was a bad thing. For this purpose he armed his sons, I think, and servants with fowling-pieces, and, after sundry marchings and counter-marchings, we divided into two parties, which met at certain points and discharged their guns. The battle over, we lay down upon the green slope of the lawn, which on one side of the house descended abruptly, and there, in the glow of a setting sun, emptied our mead-cups, like the Scandinavian heroes of old, in memory of our valiant deeds. (Mead was at that time a popular and favourite beverage in the country.) When I next remember being in his presence, he lay in his coffin at my father's house. Of his personal appearance I retain not the faintest recollection. Of his great abilities and disinterestedness as a statesman; of his skill and valour as a soldier; of his eloquence and learning as a lawyer; of his enlightened love of liberty; of his amiable, fine, and generous qualities, I almost feel as if I had had a personal knowledge, having been brought up by those in whose hearts his memory was ever present, and whose tongues were never weary of illustrating his character, and reciting the facts that early taught me to venerate his name.]



only rival whom the Federal party could oppose to him, and of the only traitor he had to fear in the Democratic party. The Vice-President, by killing Hamilton, had destroyed himself. He had aimed at putting out of the way the obstacle which prevented the success of his negotiations with the systematic opponents of the government, and all that he had done was to render an alliance between them and him still more impracticable; he had expected to form a coalition in his favour between the Democrats and Federalists of the North against Jefferson and his friends of the South, and he had rendered himself odious both to Democrats and Federalists. From this time forwards he was incapable of seriously injuring his own party, either by attempting to dismember it, or by deserting to the enemy.

Jefferson had a right to be an optimist, for he was singularly lucky. The history of his first presidency is the history of a series of fortunate hits. The greatest of all was that of succeeding Washington and his friends; of finding the government settled, a financial system established, the Federalist reaction produced by the French revolution dwindled to nothing, the country tired of political quarrels, and disposed to seek, either in religious controversies or great commercial enterprises, another field for its activity. As President he was thus able, without exposing the United States to any extreme danger, to gratify American democracy in all manner of ways, to relax the restraints which his predecessors had been compelled to enforce, to lighten the taxes which they had been obliged to impose, to redeem the debt which they had been obliged to consolidate, to diminish the army and navy which they had been obliged to create. One event only, the



occupation of Louisiana by France, seemed for a moment as if it would expose the impolicy of his excessive complaisance for the avarice of the masses; but an abrupt resolution on the part of the First Consul soon caused Jefferson's imprudence to appear in the eyes of the nation as the policy of a wisdom as imperturbable as it was bold. The developement of the commercial power of the United States began to show itself under his administration; he was thanked for it as if the merit were his. His name henceforth was associated with the idea of cheap government, national expansion, and material prosperity. He had only two formidable opponents — they destroyed each other; and Jefferson remained, without any competitor of note, in possession of public favour. Re-elected a second time to the Presidency by the unanimous vote of his party, he obtained a majority of one hundred and sixty-two votes against fourteen, over General Pinckney, the Federalist candidate. This was really the measure of his credit with the American people. Almost as popular as Washington had been in the early days of his government, Jefferson, however, never possessed that moral influence in the country which Washington preserved to the end in spite of the calumnious misrepresentations of the Democratic party. To acquire authority over the minds of men, it is not sufficient to appear in their eyes able and fortunate; it is necessary to impose upon them by a superiority of will and judgement. Jefferson was not very imposing either by force of character or intelligence. He was, at one and the same time, too much inclined to bow down before popular opinion and too prone to startle common sense. While there was next to no originality in his general policy, his expedients in detail often bore the



stamp of fantastic eccentricity bordering on the ridiculous. Even his own party abandoned him to the laughter of the Federalists, when, in order to preserve the American fleet from the danger of rotting, he proposed to Congress to land it, to store it in a warehouse, and thus, henceforth, to have a navy without sailors, shut up in ports without water!

His economical views were not of a much higher order when he declared that the country would be sufficiently defended by the construction of two hundred and fifty gun-boats, which would at once serve instead of permanent fortifications and ships of the line. No one was misled as to the value of this so-called system of defence, which was the sport of all professional people as soon as it was announced. Congress, nevertheless, adopted it out of its great indulgence for the military conceptions of the President; and which, moreover, were really very much in unison with the general policy of the American government. It was already apparent enough, that out of the war with England and France a great number of annoyances must arise. The commercial and maritime states earnestly demanded to be protected against the vexatious acts of the belligerents, who were in the practice of coming into their waters to intercept their vessels, or impress their sailors. A respectable fleet alone could answer this purpose; but the Democratic party which had originated in the agricultural states, had long since decided against the formation of a national navy. It was, in its estimation, a superfluity at once costly and dangerous. What, in fact, was the use of it? To protect commerce? But was it not possible to do without commerce; and would it not be better to abandon it altogether than to ruin the country

by huge armaments, and to expose it to the temptation of entering into competition with the great maritime powers? Jefferson was not far from sharing these views; but, as head of the government, he could not take up such a decided position. To give a seeming satisfaction to the northern states without causing umbrage to his party; to furnish America with a navy, but an economical and unaggressive navy, which the Democrats could support without inconsistency, and with which the government could amuse the country without running the risk of being tempted by it to a haughtier defence of the American flag than was agreeable to it—such was the problem which Jefferson thought he had resolved by building his gun-boats. The result was, that American commerce remained defenceless; the insolence of the belligerents increased from day to day, and from weakness to weakness the United States glided into war without being in the least prepared for it. This extreme consequence of the system of peace and economy at any price, was not destined, however, to evolve itself under Jefferson's administration. During his first presidency he had reaped all that his predecessors had sown; during his second presidency he had contrived to gain enough time to leave to his successor the task of reaping the fruits of his policy.



CHAPTER X.

1805—1809.

JEFFERSON'S SECOND PRESIDENCY — DIVISION AND CORRUPTION OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY—LOWERING OF THE INTELLECTUAL STANDARD IN CONGRESS — BURR'S CONSPIRACY — JEFFERSON'S RELATIONS WITH HIS CABINET — MISUNDERSTANDINGS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND ENGLAND AND FRANCE ON THE RIGHTS OF NEUTRALS—WISE AND FIRM ATTITUDE TAKEN BY WASHINGTON WITH RESPECT TO BELLIGERENTS — JEFFERSON'S *QUAKER SYSTEM* — QUARREL BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND ENGLAND GROWS MORE VIOLENT — THE CONTINENTAL BLOCKADE AND THE ORDERS IN COUNCIL — *THE EMBARGO* — VIOLENT AGITATIONS IN THE STATES OF NEW ENGLAND — CONGRESS RAISES THE EMBARGO AND SUBSTITUTES *NON-INTERCOURSE* — JEFFERSON RETURNS TO PRIVATE LIFE, LEAVING TO HIS SUCCESSOR THE TASK OF REAPING THE FRUITS OF HIS POLICY.

WHILE the insolence of the belligerents was preparing great vexations for Jefferson, the moral aspect of his party was giving him many causes of disgust. Confusion took possession of the Democratic phalanx. Violent quarrels had publicly broken out in it; it was turning against itself its whole arsenal of denunciations and insults. The republicans, by their attack upon each other, were at length dragging into broad day all the laxity of principle and all the corruption existing in a party which had presumed to constitute itself the champion of the plain good sense of the American people against the monarchical dreams of the Federalists, and the guardian of public morality against the 'corrupt squadron' of Hamilton. At New York, Clinton's faction,



after having come to an understanding with Livingstone's faction for the purpose of suborning the legislature, and purchasing from it in hard cash the privilege of establishing a democratic bank intended to compete with the Federal banks, most virtuously, in 1805, rebuked its former ally for having, under similar circumstances, speculated on the venality of certain senators a little too exclusively to its own advantage. In Philadelphia, M'Kean, the governor, one of the most violent leaders of the Democratic party, found himself quite outdone by a little knot of ultra-radicals who aimed at suppressing barristers, at destroying the irremovability of the judges, and reducing the period of service in the Senate to one year. In order to defend both the constitution of Pennsylvania and common sense from the attacks of the 'friends of the people,' the governor was reduced to the necessity of laying bare in the public newspapers the turpitudes of his former friends. One had been an English spy, another guilty of swindling, a third of robbing the public. Replies not a whit less acrimonious nor less personal were showered down in abundance, and the rage of these brethren, now turned into enemies, became so blind that there was reason to fear a civil war.

In the midst of these disgraceful dissensions, Jefferson's principal care was to keep aloof from them; his principal consolation to think, that, with a little prudence, he might reach the threshold of his retreat without embroiling himself with any of his old adherents, and so cast on those who were to follow him the disagreeable task of having to choose between the different fractions of the party.* This hope was de-

* Jefferson's Works, vol. iv. p. 555; Letter to Dr. Logan, May 11, 1805.

stined to be soon disappointed. It was easy enough for the President to ignore local quarrels, but not so easy to ignore the discussions in Congress. In the session of 1805, Mr. John Randolph, who was the government leader in the House of Representatives, had, in a very unseemly debate, given the members of the Cabinet some most disagreeable proofs of his ill-will. Georgia having ceded to the United States the territory which now forms the states of Mississippi and Alabama, the Federal government had to examine into the validity of the grants made in this vast region by the different powers which had successively had jurisdiction over it. Among the grantees were four companies which, by associating with them in their operations the majority of the two branches of the Georgian legislature, had contrived to obtain more than twenty millions of acres for the sum of five hundred thousand dollars. The bargain was so evidently a fraudulent one, the vote which sanctioned it was so notoriously stained with corruption, that the Georgian legislature itself, recently re-elected under the influence of the feeling aroused by this nefarious job, had thought it its duty to repeal the grant. The companies, however, had time enough to transfer by sales, bona fide or otherwise, a great portion of their lands into the hands of third parties, who declared they had been induced to purchase on the faith of a legislative act, and maintained that they could not be evicted. Jefferson's cabinet, after deliberating on their claims, recommended Congress to indemnify them for the loss they would incur by their eviction, which they rated at five millions of dollars. This was, in fact, giving them about ten times more than the original purchasers had paid. Such an act of prodigality appeared monstrous to John Randolph, and he



opposed it in a manner that was highly offensive to the cabinet. In the estimation of this despotic man of the people, no one could be honest the moment he ceased to be on his side. He therefore did not hesitate to declare on the floor of the house, that all those who supported the proposed compromise were either persons to be benefited by it, or else persons bought by those who were so. Though the Democratic majority was beginning to grow weary of the dictatorial manners and insolent extravagance of its leader, Randolph, nevertheless, made such an impression on the house as to cause the rejection of the bill. The administration did not forgive him this freak. One of Mr. Randolph's friends, having suggested to Jefferson that it would be easy to tame this intractable demagogue by appointing him minister to London, only got from the President a peremptory refusal. Enraged at finding himself of so little account among men whom he had been accustomed to treat as dependents, Randolph merely waited for the beginning of the session of 1806 to proclaim open war against the government. He carried off with him hardly as many as half a dozen followers, and the house recovered much more easily than he had anticipated from the emotion caused by his defection. But, for all this, it did not the less leave a vacancy in the Democratic staff difficult to fill up. The majority which remained faithful to Jefferson was less enlightened than numerous; it had great need of being led, and it included no one who could replace Randolph.

Every step of the democratic spirit in advance was marked by a subsidence of the intellectual level of the national representatives. Really superior men were beginning to feel a disgust for public life. The mass of the people very willingly dispensed with their aid,



and was exceedingly satisfied at being represented by none but its own peers. Thus mediocrity was more and more engrossing its favour, and Jefferson, who was constantly paying compliments to the good sense and good feeling of Congress, was every moment made to feel how much the two houses were beneath their official position. In the month of April 1806, it was in the Senate he desired to see one of his friends, Mr. Nicholas, a clever man, who seemed but little anxious to quit his retirement: —

'A majority of the Senate,' he writes to him, 'means well. But Tracy and Bayard (Federalists) are too dexterous for them, and have very much influenced their proceedings. . . . Seven Federalists voting always in phalanx, and joined by some discontented Republicans, some oblique ones, some capricious, have so often made a majority as to produce very serious embarrassment to the public operations; and very much do I dread the submitting to them, at the next session, any treaty which can be made with either England or Spain, when I consider that five joining the Federalists can defeat a friendly settlement of our affairs.' *

In the month of February 1807, it was in the House of Representatives that he missed and regretted the absence of his friend:—

Never did the calls of patriotism more loudly assail you than at this moment. After excepting the Federalists, who will be twenty-seven, and the little band of schismatics, who will be three or four (all tongue), the residue of the House of Representatives is as well-disposed a body of men as I ever saw collected; but there is no one whose talents and standing; taken together, have weight enough to give him the lead. The consequence is, that there is no one who will undertake to do the public business, and it remains undone. †

* Jefferson's Works, vol. v. p. 4.

† Ibid. vol. v. p. 48; Letter to Nicholas, February 25, 1807.

Thus feebly composed, Congress could neither exercise an effectual control over the Cabinet, nor yet be an effectual prop to it. Habitually deferential, even to servility, to the slightest wishes of the President, the majority would, at times, be perfectly deaf to his call; it would sanction without enquiry the least reasonable and most vexatious acts of the administration, and then lend itself, without intentional ill-will, to the insidious manœuvres of the opposition; always prompt to return to its obedience, but always incapable of effacing the damage done by its caprices to the moral influence of the President. The nation resembled Congress; like the latter, it was, at the same time, very much attached to its government, and very much exposed to be taken by surprise: thus it was enough for the bold filibuster, once vice-president of the United States, Colonel Burr, to give out that the administration was secretly encouraging him to make an expedition against Mexico, in order to succeed in persuading numbers of good citizens to embark in a mad and mysterious adventure, the principal object of which seems to have been to induce the western states to revolt, and to plunder the bank of New Orleans.* But no sooner did Jefferson, in a proclamation, put the country on its guard against the factious designs of Burr, than the sympathy which this little Catiline met with in the west was followed by a panic. Jefferson thought he could take advantage of this creditable feeling of alarm for the purpose of imparting a special solemnity to the suppression of the pitiful outbreak, by which the murderer of Hamilton consummated his career; he therefore applied to Congress for the sus-

* 1806–1807.



pension of the *habeas corpus*. The Senate, adjourning all other business, passed a bill for this purpose unanimously, but scarcely had the bill passed, when certain rumours, skilfully circulated by the President's enemies, and greedily swallowed by the public, interposed, in the most unexpected way, to cause the failure of the measure in the House of Representatives. The alarm produced by Burr's conspiracy was, so they said, very much exaggerated; the administration knew this better than anybody, but it exaggerated the danger in order to swell its own importance, and give itself the air of having saved the country. The bill was rejected by a majority of 113 against 19.*

Extremely mortified at this check, Jefferson was all the more violent in his resolution to establish Burr's guilt in a court of justice. Forgetful of what was due to the dignity of his position, he secretly made himself the manager of the prosecution; he descended into all the details of the indictment with virulent minuteness; he gave instructions to the Federal attorney-general; he played upon his vanity, inflamed his hatred, and was incessantly warning him against the supposed leaning and dishonesty of Chief-Justice Marshall, a firm and upright magistrate, whose Federalist opinions made him an object of suspicion to the government. All the trouble which Jefferson gave himself was useless; the evidence shed an insufficient light on Burr's intrigues, and he was acquitted by the jury.† The President exclaimed, in his wrath, that there could be no safety for the Union as long as the judges continued to be appointed for life, and political justice administered by

* January 26, 1807. † September, 1807.



a body placed above the periodical revolutions which took place in the other bodies of the State.*

But this intolerant democrat, who thought it so insupportable a thing that the constitution should refuse him the means of expelling his political enemies from the judicial bench, submitted with the best possible grace to a partnership in the executive power which the constitution was very far from imposing on him.

'Our government,' he wrote to Mr. William Short, the 12th of June, 1807, 'although in theory subject to be directed by the unadvised will of the President, is, and from its origin has been, a very different thing in practice. The minor business in each department is done by the head of the department, on consultation with the President alone. But all matters of importance or difficulty are submitted to all the heads of departments composing the Cabinet, sometimes by the President's consulting them separately and successively, as they happen to call on him; but in the greatest cases by calling them together, discussing the subject maturely, and finally taking the vote, in which the President counts himself but as one. So that in all important cases the executive is, in fact, a Directory, which certainly the President might control; but of this there was never an example, either in the first or the present administration.' †

Washington would not, I am inclined to believe, have recognised his own government in this portrait; he would not have admitted that, during his administration, the executive had been in the hands of a Directory. The responsible head of the State, he had not shared the supreme power with anyone; his cabinet was simply regarded by him as a council, very carefully listened to, but never sovereign. Among the great

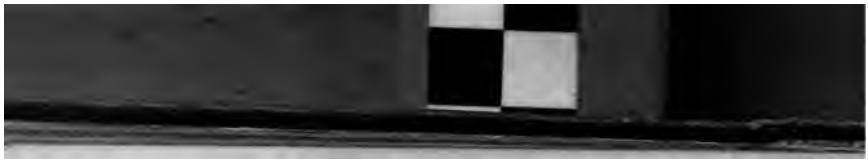
* Jefferson's Works, vol. v. pp. 68, 199.

† Ibid. vol. v. p. 94.



men of his order, Washington was perhaps the one who, whether in war or politics, most consulted his subordinates before deciding on a course of action, and who, having once decided, the least troubled himself about other men's opinions or obstacles of any kind. His intelligence was neither very ready nor very inventive; he required a council which could offer him suggestions from which to select, and it was after maturely weighing the various opinions offered to him that he fixed upon his own with matchless accuracy of judgement and energy of purpose. Evidence, were it requisite, could be derived from Jefferson's memoirs to show that Washington's decision was not always or necessarily that of the majority; but what matters it? It was a decision, and this alone suffices to bring out distinctly the inversion of the relations between the President and his councillors which Jefferson had permitted to creep in.

It was especially during his second administration that this inversion of the old relations became conspicuous. It was now no longer the Cabinet submitting its ideas to the President, but the President submitting his ideas to the Cabinet, or rather to the Secretary of State, Madison, whose influence was evidently tending to become ascendant in the government. By character, however, Madison was not a leader; the instinct of command was deficient in him; but, by his position as well as by his intellectual qualifications, he had a hold upon his natural chief. He was Jefferson's presumptive heir, and in virtue of this had some right to influence the course of affairs which he must soon be called upon to conduct on his sole responsibility to a good issue. Jefferson very willingly conceded this right to him. Far from evincing any jealousy of this minister, whom public opinion already indicated as his successor, his



anxiety, on the contrary, seemed to be to make room for him. He had had more than enough of the presidency. Its efficient power had been very much enfeebled in his hands, and could no longer compensate a heart somewhat proud for the servitude it imposed. He has himself told us that he was weary of an office in which he could not do more good than numbers of others who were anxious for it, and wherein he had nothing more to gain than endless toil and the daily loss of friends.

Among the questions which divided his friends the most important were those on foreign policy. Leaning to France and hatred of Great Britain had been for a long while the rallying points of the Democratic party; but the affronts received from the Directory, the designs of the First Consul upon Louisiana, his attempts at uncontrolled despotism and universal monarchy, had very sensibly cooled down the enthusiasm of the Americans in favour of the French revolution; and a good number of Democrats had even come to regard England as the bulwark of liberty, a view which the bulk of the party rejected as heretical, but which, at certain moments, Jefferson himself seemed quite disposed to adopt. In point of fact, he was very much distracted between the repugnance he had for the '*modern Attila*,' and the rancour he still cherished against his ancestral country, and these two sentiments had dominion over him alternately, accordingly as the necessity of harmonising his sympathies with those of his friends, or the events of the day acted on his mind. His impressions, whatever they might be, were always very strong, and were able to make him sometimes exaggerate, and sometimes forget, his well-considered and customary policy. He required a moderator, and



Madison was very well qualified for this office, which, moreover, he had for a long while discharged in favour of his illustrious friend. Mild, amiable, judicious, and methodical, the very last thing that could happen to the Secretary of State would have been to give way to passion. • A Federalist by instinct, he had become a Democrat from calculation, and never diverged from the line which was distinctive of his party. He persisted, therefore, in the policy of a French alliance, and gently won back the President, whenever the latter showed any disposition to abandon it. During the summer of 1805, being alone at Monticello, far from his ministers, Jefferson experienced one of these temptations to draw nearer to Great Britain. The French government had recently given him various reasons to be displeased. A serious difference had arisen between Spain and the United States with respect to the limits of Louisiana, which the Americans wished to extend so far to the east as to include a part of Florida, and the haughty countenance given by the French diplomatists to Spain's resistance excessively baulked their cupidity, and wounded their vanity. The Emperor's minister at Washington had, in addition to this, most gratuitously offended the Federal government by notifying to it in a cavalier tone his desire that General Moreau, a French exile, should not be too warmly received in America. It was on being informed of this piece of impertinence that the President broke out:—

'The style of that government,' he wrote to the Secretary of State, 'in the Spanish business was calculated to excite indignation; but it was a case in which that might have done injury. But the present is a case which would justify some notice, in order to let them understand we are not of those powers who will receive and execute mandates. . . . I am



strongly impressed with a belief of hostile and treacherous intentions against us on the part of France, and that we should lose no time in securing something more than a mutual friendship with England.' *

And he submitted to Madison the plan of a prospective treaty with Great Britain, by which this power was to engage to guarantee the possession of Florida to the United States, if, in the event of their wishing to maintain their right to the disputed territory, they should decide on making common cause with her against France and Spain—a diplomatic conceit forgotten almost as soon as made, and which, shortly under the Secretary of State's influence, appeared so little democratic to the President, that, finding it necessary, some six months afterwards, to explain the causes of his rupture with Randolph, he put the idea of a *league with England* amongst the most insupportable heresies of the dissident faction.† The Cabinet had, in fact, adopted a policy diametrically the opposite of that which Jefferson suggested, and which Randolph was still crying up in Congress. It was bent, not on conquering Florida, but on buying it; not on braving Napoleon, but on indirectly replenishing his exchequer; not on uniting with England, but on replying by reprisals on its commerce to its violation of the freedom of the seas.‡

From 1793, the rights and duties of the United States as neutrals were the subject of almost all their misunderstandings with Europe. England and France, while professing opposite opinions on this most im-

* Jefferson's Works, vol. iv. pp. 584–587; Letter to Madison, August 25, 1805.

† Ibid. vol. iv. p. 591; Letter to Duane, March 22, 1806.

‡ March 1806.



portant matter, but too often pursued a similar and equally spoliatory course. England maintained its old maritime jurisprudence, which France declared contrary to modern international law, but which she frequently applied by way of reprisal to those Powers who violated, what in her eyes was natural law, by permitting it to be violated by Great Britain. In point of fact, the object of Great Britain was to suppress all neutral commerce not carried on for her own benefit, and of France to interdict the very state of neutrality itself. Washington undertook to resist the first of these pretensions without yielding to the second, and had succeeded solely by adopting a policy opposed to that of the Democratic party. Desirous to maintain peace, he prepared for war; his great aim was to make himself formidable, and to show himself neither insolent nor hostile. Some ambitious and insane men, also giving themselves out as anxious to maintain peace, had asserted, even in his day, that, in order to bring England to repentance, it was necessary to place the American flag under the protection of established principles, and British industry under the fire of a war of tariffs. Intimately persuaded that inflexible pretensions and disguised hostilities would inevitably lead to an open rupture, Washington prudently declined making himself the champion of any particular view of maritime law; he accepted and appealed to no other rule than that of existing treaties; all he proposed to himself was to obtain the relinquishment or mitigation of practices which were most prejudicial to American interests; he recommended to Congress no measures more menacing than that of preparing to arm; and when the House of Representatives had nearly rendered war inevitable, by adopting some violent resolutions against England,



he abruptly stopped the national legislature in its mischievous course by announcing to the Senate that he had appointed Mr. Jay envoy extraordinary to the Court of St. James's, in order to effect, if possible, a peaceful settlement of the differences between the two nations by means of negotiation.

The treaty of friendship, commerce, and navigation concluded in London in 1794, was the fruit of this policy. This treaty certainly did not put an end to all grounds of dispute between the two nations; it certainly did not decide all the questions at issue in favour of America; but it re-established a good feeling between the two governments, and enabled them to regulate in a spirit of kindness and mutual respect any differences that remained unsettled. It did not formally secure American seamen against the danger of being impressed by mistake, but it animated the English Cabinet with a desire to repair such mistakes and avoid them in future; it did not explicitly oblige England to abandon the practice of 1756, by which she debarred neutrals from any commerce with the colonial possessions of her enemies, but it imposed upon her the engagement to give full compensation to those American citizens whose ships had been seized and condemned in virtue of this practice; it did not prevent her regarding and seizing provisions as contraband of war, but it bound her to pay the owners the value of the cargo. In spite of many omissions in the treaty, in spite of the violent popular clamour with which it was assailed, Washington thought it his duty to ratify it. Events showed he was in the right. This spirited act secured to the country twelve years of peace and commercial prosperity, and was worth to the merchants who had suffered by English spoliations more than fifty millions of francs.



In vain could it be objected that it provoked the Directory to increase its predatory attacks upon American commerce. The firmness of the government of the United States, and its preparations for war, acted upon France as they had acted upon England. On the 13th of September, 1800, under the administration of the First Consul, a treaty, which rebuked the vexatious pretensions of the Directory, was signed at Paris; a negotiation having for its object to fix the indemnity due to the merchants who had suffered from French spoliations was opened, and on the 13th of April, 1803, at the time of the cession of Louisiana to the United States, the amount of this indemnity was fixed at twenty millions of francs. The policy of the Federalists had been successful with the two belligerents in turn; the policy of the Democrats was now to have its trial.

From the time of his accession to power, Jefferson had, on all questions of neutral rights, taken up a position quite different from that of Washington. He seemed to attach much more importance to not compromising principles than to defending, practically and according to the exigencies of the moment, the interests of American navigation. He devised a theory touching the future law of nations, which would have done no less than deprive belligerents of the right of search, and, while acknowledging that the time for imposing this new doctrine on the world was not yet come, he prematurely decided on not renewing any treaties at variance with it, choosing rather to leave the American flag without any diplomatic protection than to accept incomplete guarantees for its security.* The United States government, therefore, suffered Jay's treaty to

* Jefferson's Works, vol. iv. pp. 408–412, 413–415.



expire in 1803, without renewing its maritime provisions. In 1804, Jefferson had already learned by experience how dangerous and foolish it is to suppress formal compacts between nations, and had felt the necessity of sacrificing several points of his doctrine to the expediency of again binding Great Britain by a treaty; but, while returning to a more sensible course, he could not so completely divest his mind of its first mistake as to be able to give up an imperative pretension, which rendered the success of his negotiation impossible. Of all the rights which Great Britain arrogated to herself, that of searching for, and seizing, deserters from her ships on board American merchantmen, was at once the most questionable, the most vexatious, and the most essential to the support of her navy. She could neither exercise it without encroaching on the jurisdiction of the United States, and frequently infringing, however unintentionally, the personal liberty of their citizens, nor yet abandon it without running the risk of losing a great part of her crews by desertion. The United States had a right to protest against this abuse; but England had so great an interest in maintaining it, that the American government could not reasonably expect she would relinquish it, unless constrained to do so by superior force. But such a force the American government had not, and could not for a long time have; it did nothing even towards acquiring it, and situated as the affairs of the world then were, the good-will of the United States was of infinitely less importance to England than the preservation of her seamen. To make the settlement of this question of impressment the *sine quâ non* of a treaty with Great Britain, was to render a treaty impossible.

Here was the radical defect of the instructions trans-



mitted to Mr. Munroe, minister of the United States to England,* on the 5th of January, 1804. While this agent was pursuing a chimera, the English Admiralty, no longer bound by any diplomatic stipulations, and emboldened by the weakness of the American navy, arrogantly resumed its tyrannical practices; it revived the system of 1756 in all its rigour, it multiplied paper blockades, it more and more made use of its pretended search for deserters a means of manning its navy. In less than three years the British cruisers had, by their irregular captures, caused the insurance offices of the single port of Philadelphia a loss of more than five millions of francs, and carried off from American merchant vessels more than three thousand seamen.† Jefferson, in 1806, found himself, with respect to England, in a position analogous to that which Washington occupied in 1794, with this difference, however, that there was much less exasperation of feeling at home, that public opinion was less eager to force the government into retaliatory acts, and that consequently a sound policy was much more open to him. But Jefferson and Madison had been for a long time under the influence of a false and routine impression, which urged them to provoke a war without wishing for it. They fancied that the United States government held in its hand the industrial energies of England, and that without drawing a sword, by mere custom-house regulations, it could dry up the sources of the wealth of the rulers of the ocean, hold their power in check, and compel them to abandon their pretensions. Misled by the recollection of the formidable leagues which, from

* American State Papers vol. iii. p. 81.

† Ibid. vol. ii. pp. 742–745, 776.



1767 to 1774, had been formed in the province against the consumption of English merchandise and the export of American products, they figured to themselves that the heroic expedient of passive resistance, which the colonies had made use of against the mother-country, before unfurling the flag of independence, was still at the service of the United States, now become a nation. They forgot that, even at the time of the revolution, American commerce had not easily consented to give up its dealings with England, and efface itself for the purpose of defending the rights of the country. That spirit of self-denial and resignation, which enthusiasm for the cause of public liberty, combined with habits of fidelity to the crown, had with difficulty instilled into the American merchants, the feeble government of the United States could hardly undertake to require from them; it was in no condition whatever to be able to constrain the great people over whose interests it was bound to watch, to remain for a long time the passive spectator of its own ruin, and to undergo the privations of war without the stimulus of looking forward to any of its honours. To sever the commercial ties between the two countries was to lead them inevitably to a rupture; to close the American market against England was to deprive her of every inducement to attach any value to the maintenance of peace, was to provoke her to use her strength in order to reconquer commercial relations with the United States by force of arms.

The custom-house prohibitions which received the sanction of Congress in 1806 were the first step to the system of *embargo and non-intercourse*, of which the war of 1812 was the natural consequence. At the moment when Congress was thus committing an act of hostility against Great Britain, what were its military

and naval preparations? It fixed the number of sailors to be placed at the President's disposal for the defence of the country at 925. Scarcely had it made this great patriotic effort, when Mr. Pitt's death, and the accession of Mr. Fox to the ministry, produced a sudden change in Jefferson's plans and diplomatic views. Mr. Fox had always shown himself favourable to the United States. The President thought he could easily obtain from him the concessions and reparations which he had in vain asked from his predecessor. Under this persuasion he commissioned Mr. William Pinkney to proceed to London, to resume, in concert with Mr. Munroe, the negotiations begun in 1804; he was most prodigal of his flatteries to the new administration, conjuring it not to take offence at the threatening measures adopted by Congress, measures directed, he said, not against the English nation, but against Mr. Pitt. He represents England as the natural friend of the United States; 'leans to the belief,' he says, 'that an English ascendency at sea is safer for us than that of France;' and anticipates the settlement of their differences from his confidence in the well-known integrity and good sense of Mr. Fox.* As soon as Congress had reassembled, the custom-house prohibitions voted at the close of the last session were, in fact, suspended; but the real obstacle to the success of the negotiation was not removed. In virtue of their instructions, the commissioners of the United States were restricted from agreeing to any

* Jefferson's Works, vol. v. pp. 9–13; Letter to Munroe. ['No two countries,' he writes, 'have so many points of common interest and friendship; and the rulers must be great bunglers indeed if, with such disposition, they break asunder.' What a censure on the disgraceful policy pursued by his successor, Madison, a few years after, and on his own immediately after!]



treaty which did not contain, on the part of Great Britain, a formal renunciation of the right of taking its seamen out of American merchant vessels. Messrs. Pinkney and Munroe very soon perceived that there was not the slightest chance of their obtaining such a concession. The English government showed itself quite disposed to undertake that the right of search should be put in practice with the greatest possible moderation; it even made them understand that it might be inclined not to make use of it; but it positively refused to sacrifice it in principle; on all the other points in dispute it was, moreover, disposed to make the largest concessions. In spite of their instructions, the two American agents were of opinion that it would be madness to lose the benefit of these friendly arrangements by obstinately insisting on the settlement of the question of impressment. They agreed, therefore, to omit all allusion to it in the convention they were negotiating, and they signed a treaty which, though taking Mr. Jay's for its basis, was in many respects more advantageous than that to the United States. Jefferson refused to ratify it.* Meanwhile, Pitt returned to office in England, and the admirable opportunity which the President had of re-establishing amicable relations between the two countries was completely thrown away. On one side and the other all attempts at friendly adjustment were now at an end; bad feeling increased, and bad faith became the order of the day. If an American sailor suited the purpose of an English cruiser, he was imme-

* [Jefferson had the humiliation of living to see a war, brought on eventually in 1812 by his own folly, concluded by a treaty in which the question of impressment was utterly ignored, though it had been the pretended ground of the quarrel.]



diately claimed and seized as a runaway seaman. If an English seaman deserted, and found his way to the United States, he was forthwith converted into an American citizen. The state governments granted him letters of naturalization, or false certificates of birth; the officers of the Federal government admitted him into the navy; and whenever his former officers came ashore he had the pleasure of defying them. The English deserters on board the United States frigate Chesapeake, then lying at Washington, had made themselves so conspicuous in this way, as to cause serious remonstrances from the officer in command of the English squadron stationed off the coast of Virginia. The irritation between the two navies was so violent as to give reason to apprehend a collision; still the American government, in spite even of its bravadoes, persisted in its habitual heedlessness and want of preparation, neither foreseeing the probability of a conflict nor doing anything to come out of it with honour.

On June 22, 1807, the Chesapeake, under the orders of Commodore Barron, quitted its moorings in Hampton Roads to proceed to the Mediterranean to relieve the Constitution frigate. There was the most improvident feeling of security, and the greatest disorder on board. The ship's company was new, the decks hampered, the guns in bad condition, and the ammunition short. Nothing was in readiness for a fight, when, at about seven or eight miles from the coast, the American frigate was hailed by the British ship Leopard. The English officer in command, Captain Humphries, informed Commodore Barron that he had been ordered by Admiral Berkeley to search the Chesapeake for deserters known to be on board that vessel. Nothing could be more contrary to the usages of civilised nations



than this singular requisition. The English legists themselves had never dreamt of asserting that the English crown had jurisdiction over foreign ships of war. Commodore Barron utterly refused to accede to such a request; the English officer insisted, and, his signals not being attended to, he fired first one shot, then another, then a broadside, by which three men were killed on board the American frigate, eighteen wounded, and the rigging damaged. Barron himself was hit. The American officers exerted themselves in vain to return the fire; they succeeded in loading the guns, but could not discharge them. In the absence of matches, they with difficulty succeeded in firing one gun by means of a piece of lighted charcoal. After this mere shadow of a defence, Barron, overwhelmed with rage and shame, lowered his flag. Several English officers came on board, mustered the ship's company, and laid hold of the sailors accused of deserting. Barron informed the captain of the Leopard that he regarded himself as his prisoner; the latter replied that, having fulfilled his orders, he had nothing more to ask of the commodore, and the English officers withdrew with impertinent courtesy, leaving the Chesapeake free to pursue its course; a few hours afterwards it returned to the port of Norfolk, and the crew, humiliated and indignant, communicated their wrath to the country. When such an insult has been inflicted on the flag of a great state which she cannot instantly avenge, small and tardy reprisals are as undignified as they are useless; and, unless resolved to do itself justice by force of arms, the outraged country should make it a point calmly to demand and wait for the reparation which is its due. Jefferson showed himself equally destitute of resolution and coolness after this disagreeable incident, which he



had not taken the precaution to prevent. In reality—and his correspondence proves it—he wavered between peace and war, not knowing which to prefer on his own account or that of his country, and anxious to throw all the responsibility of the decision upon Congress; but he made it a point at the same time to assume a show of vigour. By a proclamation dated July 2, 1807, he, in order that the outrage upon the Chesapeake should not seem to remain for a single instant unavenged, gave notice to the English ships of war to leave the American waters—an order as compromising as it was ridiculous, as spiteful as it was impotent, to which the English squadron paid no attention, which the President was in no condition to enforce, which excited in the English government both ill-humour and contempt, and of which the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Canning, availed himself for the purpose of cavilling about the amount of reparation due to the American government, after having thus taken the law in its own hands.*

The United States were hardly more respected in Paris than in London. The worse their relations became with England, and the more impossible their alliance with the great rival of France, the less did the Emperor Napoleon think himself called upon to treat them with consideration. Their overtures for the purchase of Florida had been put aside with disdain; their efforts to obtain on behalf of their merchants the execution of the treaty of September 13, 1800, were on the point of being ineffectual. Driven from the ocean by England, Napoleon had resolved to drive her from the continent. Not being able to reduce her by sheer

* Jefferson's Works, vol. vi. pp. 53, 63. [See Appendix IX.]

force, he had hit upon the project of starving her into a surrender by closing all the markets of Europe against her ships and her produce—a gigantic chimera, which the achievement of universal monarchy could not have realized, but which tended to lead him in the direction of it, and which was, in fact, at the bottom of the most insane, unjust, and disastrous acts of the imperial government—the war in Spain, the absorption of the States of the Church and of Holland into the empire, and the Russian war. It was, however, from Great Britain herself that Napoleon borrowed the idea of his continental system. Great Britain was the first to make a monstrous abuse of the right of blockade, by arrogating to herself the privilege of debarring all the world, by her simple orders in council, from any communication with entire countries which it could not effectually blockade. Napoleon took advantage of this to declare, on December 21, 1806, in his Berlin decree, that he had put the British islands in a state of blockade, and that in consequence all correspondence and commerce with England were forbidden; that any ship touching at any English port would be excluded from French ports and those subject to France; that any ship evading this regulation by means of false papers would be considered lawful prize; and that all merchandise of English manufacture would be confiscated.* At first the American government affected to regard the Berlin decree as a lawful act of internal legislation, in no way infringing the rights of neutrals; in fact, a mere prohibitory regulation, intended to exclude English produce, and ships coming from England, from the imperial ports, but not authorising French cruisers to capture on the high seas, and, contrary to the stipulations of the treaty of 1800,

* [See Appendix X.]

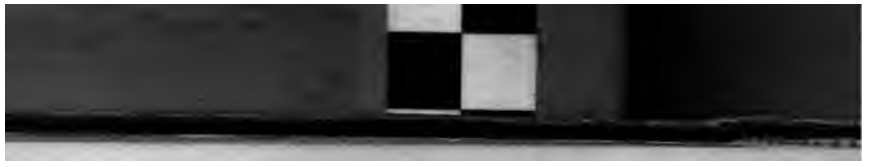


American vessels laden with English produce, or coming from England. While Napoleon was occupied with the campaign in Poland, the language and conduct of the imperial government appeared to justify this interpretation of the Berlin decree; but as soon as he had procured at Tilsit the sanction of Russia to the continental system, he resolved to impose it without exception on all neutral powers. On December 18, 1807, the Procureur-General of the Council of Prizes was, therefore, officially informed by the Grand Judge, Regnier, that the Emperor considered that every neutral ship clearing out of English ports with an English cargo might be lawfully captured by French ships of war. In vain did General Armstrong, the American minister in Paris, desire to be informed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, M. de Champagny, 'if it was His Majesty's intention to infringe the provisions of the treaty then existing between the United States and the French empire?'* All he could get from the minister, in the way of explanation, was a reproachful allusion to the excessive submissiveness which the United States were showing in their relations with England, and a tolerably impertinent invitation to them to join the league which all the continent of Europe was forming against her.†

At the very time when, to justify his applying the Berlin decree to the United States in all its severity, the emperor was accusing them of having failed in their duty as neutrals, by not energetically maintaining their rights against Great Britain, the English Cabinet pleaded their cowardly submission to the Berlin decree as a reason for inflicting upon them those retaliatory measures which were its reply to the continental

* American State Papers, vol. iii. p. 244.

† Ibid. vol. iii. pp. 245, 248.



system. The famous orders in council, published on November 11, 1807, positively prohibited any vessel, under pain of capture, to go to any country from which the British flag was excluded, without previously touching at an English port, paying dues, and obtaining a sailing license. Immediately meeting these reprisals by other reprisals, Napoleon declared in his Milan decree, December 17, 1807, that all ships submitting to the tyrannous injunctions of his enemies would be regarded in France as having forfeited their national rights, and consequently be lawful prize; quite persuaded, moreover, that he could dispose of the United States as he did of their ships, he bluntly informs the President that, in fact, war exists between England and the United States, and that he considers it as declared from the day on which England published her decrees,*—extraordinary language, which rendered it quite superfluous for General Armstrong to inform his government, as he did, that it had suffered itself to fall very low in the estimation of the world, and that in Paris people had but a very sorry idea either of its pride or its strength. It is believed here 'that we cannot do much, and even that we will not do what we have the power of doing.' †

The flag of the United States, shut out from all communication with the whole world by two rival nations, their commerce intercepted whatever its destination might be, their vessels pillaged by the English if they did not purchase in England a license to navigate the ocean, and exposed for having purchased it to be captured by the French, the mother-country levying tribute upon their citizens just as before their independence,

* American State Papers, vol. iii. p. 249.

† Ibid. vol. iii. p. 256.



a foreign despot arrogating to himself the right of deciding for them on the question of peace and war,—such were the results of Jefferson's policy. He had supposed that, in the midst of a world in arms, America could, without danger, remain unarmed; that, in order to have her neutrality respected, she had only to make a great noise about her rights and her custom-houses, to take very high ground, to show herself very exacting in London and very obsequious in Paris. He had managed neither to make a timely accommodation of differences with Great Britain nor to gain credit with France for his unfriendly relations with England, and he found himself engaged in squabbles at the same with two tyrannies, which his predecessors were skillful enough to get successively rid of.

During the whole summer of 1807, the President continued in the same state of mind in which the assault of the Chesapeake had left him, inclined to break with England, though still hesitating; very much tempted to avail himself of the excellent opportunity which Great Britain afforded him of increasing the strength of his government by a just and popular war, but greatly dazzled, too, by the desire of at length putting into execution his great political discovery,—that is, of enforcing international justice by simple custom-house regulations. The news of the violation of the treaty of September 30, 1800, at last brought Jefferson's doubts to an end. It was hardly at the moment when France was rivalling England in injustice, that he could decently side with the former against the latter; it was necessary, at all events for a time, to affect equal indignation against the two culprits, without involving himself in the signal folly of what was at that time called a triangular war,—that



is to say, a war with two nations at the same time at war with each other. He resolved, therefore, to bring the commerce of both belligerents indiscriminately under the commercial ban which he had first thought of, with a view to England only, and which, in fact, could not seriously affect any other power; since, being mistress of the seas, England alone could at that time trade freely with the United States. Seizing the opportunity of the new construction put upon the Berlin decree, and under the pretext of screening American vessels from the perils to which they were exposed by the violence of the contending powers in Europe, Jefferson proposed to Congress to pass an *embargo* act, forbidding any ship, under penalty of seizure, whatever its flag, to clear out from an American port for any foreign port,—a measure which completely extinguished all commercial operations, which made all communication with Great Britain unlawful, and which consequently squared marvellously well with the continental system. Accordingly, M. de Champagny could hardly find expressions of admiration sufficiently strong for 'the grand and courageous sacrifice to which the Americans had voluntarily submitted,' and Napoleon thought of nothing else but how best to enable them to carry it out effectually. In testimony of his respect for the *embargo*, he caused all American ships which touched at any French port to be seized and confiscated. 'It was evident,' he said, 'that these vessels must be acting in defiance of the regulations of their country, and he was much too sincere an ally of the American government not to aid it in executing its own decrees.' The cabinet of St. James, on the contrary, professed to be too sincere a friend of American commerce not to encourage it to revolt against its government.

In fact, the encouragements given to ships which succeeded in breaking the embargo, were the only marks of concern about the matter which Jefferson could elicit from Mr. Canning. In vain did he engage to restore the commercial relations between the two countries, if England would revoke her orders in council. Mr. Canning haughtily replied that 'England would never consent to any step which could even mistakingly be construed into concession while the smallest link of the confederacy remains undissolved, or while it can be a question whether the plan devised for her destruction has, or has not, completely failed, or been unequivocally abandoned;' adding, with cutting irony, that, 'had it been possible for His Majesty to make any sacrifice for the repeal of the embargo, without appearing to deprecate it as a measure of hostility, he would gladly have facilitated its removal, as a measure of inconvenient restriction to the American people.'* The United States had, in fact, more to suffer than Great Britain from the state of blockade to which they had voluntarily sentenced themselves, and Jefferson himself was not long in a condition to be deluded as to the effectiveness of the embargo as a mode of diplomatic coercion. From the month of January 1808, he had ceased to regard it in any other light than as an expedient for gaining time.

'The embargo,' he says, 'keeping at home our vessels, cargoes, and seamen, saves us the necessity of making their capture a cause of immediate war; for, if going to England, France had determined to take them off to any other place, England was to take them. Till they return to some sense of moral duty, therefore, we keep within ourselves. This

* American State Papers, vol. iii. p. 232.



gives time. Time may produce peace in Europe; peace in Europe removes all causes of difference, till another European war, and by that time our debt may be paid, our revenues clear, and our strength increased.' *

Two months afterwards, the respite which the embargo gave the American government, and which was its only merit, did not seem likely even to Jefferson to last for any length of time, so great a burden did it become to the nation. 'When Congress,' he said, 'shall meet in December, they will have to consider at what point of time the embargo continued becomes a greater evil than war.'† And, in fact, this measure was not only generally ruinous to the country, but its political consequences threatened to become as disastrous as its economical. In the commercial and maritime states of the north, the law, at first fraudulently evaded, was very soon openly defied. In vain did Jefferson fret and fume; in vain did he assume a superb tone, and talk of annihilating obstacles: he had neither law nor force to back him. Neither the penal laws, nor the physical means of enforcing submission, were at all equal to the wants of a vexatious and oppressive policy. In order effectively to compel the submission of the maritime population of the United States to the tyrannical system of an embargo, it would have been requisite to have spent as much money and to have spilt as much blood as in effectively protecting it against the aggressions of Great Britain. Both the one and the other enterprise were equally impossible to a government which had for its regular army only a small corps of six thousand men, and for its navy a flotilla manned by fourteen

* Jefferson's Works, vol. v. p. 227.
† Ibid. vol. v. p. 265.

hundred sailors. In the actual state of the military and naval resources of the country, the idea of making war and that of maintaining the embargo were equally chimerical. Feeling itself compelled to choose between these two acts of folly, Congress declared in favour of the latter.* Jefferson prudently abstained from saying a word. The situation was extremely critical, the end of his presidency at hand.

'On this occasion,' he writes to Governor Lincoln, 'I think it is fair to leave to those who are to act on them the decisions they prefer, being myself but a spectator.' †

But whatever might have been his opinion as to the policy to be pursued, his friends recollected having heard him frequently repeat that, 'if Congress were really desirous of maintaining the embargo, it ought to legalise all means which may be necessary for that end.‡' New regulations repugnant to American habits were now devised for detecting, verifying, and repressing offences against the embargo law; and a larger number of cruisers was placed at the President's disposal (January 9, 1809).

On receiving intelligence of these different measures, the public mind became extremely excited in the Northern States. At Boston the ships in port lowered their flags half-mast high as a sign of mourning; the Federal newspapers appeared edged with black and bearing the device, 'Liberty is dead.' The corporation assembled, and declared the decisions of Congress were 'arbitrary and unconstitutional!' In several places the officers charged with the execution of these measures

* Dec. 17, 1808.
† Jefferson's Works, vol. v. p. 387.
‡ Ibid. vol. v. p. 336.



resigned. Those who remained at their post were threatened by the merchants with prosecution if they dared to effect the smallest seizure. The legislature of Massachusetts, while recommending its fellow-citizens to remain calm and obedient to the law, added its protest to theirs. In all the New England states the Federalists recovered, as if by magic, their old influence. The rumour soon privately circulated, that, tempted by this reaction in their favour, a coterie, notoriously partial to England, known as the Essex Junto, the yoke of which Adams had thrown off towards the close of his administration, was plotting the formation of a northern confederation under the protectorate of Great Britain. John Quincy Adams, the son of the late President, who had a hereditary hatred for the ultras of his party, accepted and spread these rumours with spiteful credulity. He had been coqueting with the Democrats, and his name gave a certain weight to his assertions respecting the secret plans of the Federal party. He confidently assured his new friends in Washington that the conspiracy was a serious one, that it had great chances of success, and that, in order to break it up, nothing short of the withdrawal of the embargo would suffice. A new member of Congress, Mr. Joseph Story, who gave himself out for a Democrat, but who, as a resident in the sea-board district of Salem, bore no good-will to Jefferson's ruinous fancy, confirmed, not without a certain degree of malicious satisfaction, his fellow-citizen's testimony. Congress was struck with terror, and the democratic majority went to pieces. In vain did its leaders attempt to rally it; it had no longer an ear for anything but the voice of the phantom which John Quincy Adams and Story had evoked. On February 3, 1809, Jeffer-

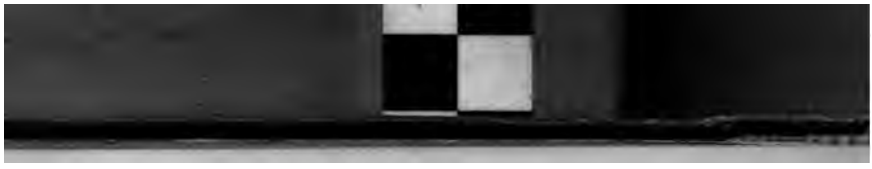
son suddenly learned that the blind zealots who, three months before, had at his request suspended all public business to pass an embargo act without enquiry and with closed doors, had just sacrificed it with equal precipitancy to a feeling of alarm. Scarcely recovered from this agitation, but already ashamed of giving way to it, the Democrats had a meeting two days afterwards to consider how they could repair the disgrace of such a discomfiture, and they determined that Congress should come back, at all events partially, upon its vote. The embargo disappeared only to be replaced by a *non-intercourse* law; the ports were reopened, but all commercial relations, either with France or England, rigorously interdicted.

But in spite of this hurry on the part of the majority to make the *amende honorable*, Jefferson could not dissemble the annoyance which this mark of feebleness and fickleness in his party had caused him:—

'I thought Congress,' he said in a letter to Mr. T. M. Randolph of Feb. 7, 1819, 'had taken their ground firmly for continuing their embargo till June, and then war. But a sudden and unaccountable revolution of opinion took place the last week, chiefly among the New England and New York members, and in a kind of panic they voted, March 4, for removing the embargo, and by such a majority as gave all reason to believe they would not agree either to war or non-intercourse. This, too, was after we had become satisfied that the Essex Junto had found their expectation desperate of inducing the people there (the North), to either separation or forcible opposition.' *

Whatever might become of it, Jefferson was too much of an optimist long to lament over his favourite measure; as early as March 2, 1809, writing to

* Jefferson's Works, vol. v. p. 424.



M. Dupont de Nemours, he discovered excellent reasons for condemning it, and his only funeral oration over this fantastic political expedient was comprised in a few words, which are the most cutting satire upon it:—

We have now taken off the embargo, except as to France and England and their territories, because fifty millions of exports, annually sacrificed, are the treble of what war would cost us; besides, that by war we should take something, and lose less than at present. . . . . But all these concerns I am now leaving to be settled by my friend Mr. Madison. Within a few days I retire to my family, my books and farms, and, having gained the harbour myself, I shall look on my friends still buffeting the storm, with anxiety indeed, but not with envy. Never did a prisoner, released from his chains, feel such relief as I shall on shaking off the shackles of power. Nature intended me for the tranquil pursuits of science, by rendering them my supreme delight. But the enormities of the times in which I have lived have forced me to take a part in resisting them, and to commit myself on the boisterous ocean of political passions. I thank God for the opportunity of retiring from them without censure, and carrying with me the most consoling proofs of public approbation.'*

At the moment that he was writing these words, the Senate gave a painful proof of how ephemeral a nature are the most powerful influences in democratic states.

It was Jefferson's merit to have been the first among his countrymen to discover the natural ties which, in spite of the difference of institutions and manners, must tend to draw the United States to Russia—a power from which they have nothing to fear, inasmuch as she does not aspire to be mistress of the ocean, and from which they have much to hope for the defence of

* Jefferson's Works, vol v. p. 432.

neutral rights in Europe, as well as for serving as a counterpoise to France and Great Britain, two nations whose absolute sway is the least compatible with the freedom of the seas. A personal correspondence, begun by the Emperor Alexander with a certain air of imperial coquetry, had sprung up between the mystic autocrat and the President philosopher. Jefferson thought that, to render an understanding so precious to his country more close and cordial, the appointment of a diplomatic staff at St. Petersburg was necessary. Fearing, probably, that he should be crossed in the execution of his purpose by some under-current of opposition, he took advantage of the adjournment of Congress to carry it into execution, and, using the provisional powers which the constitution confers upon the President in the interval between the meetings of Congress, he secretly appointed his friend, Mr. Short, Minister Plenipotentiary from the United States to Russia (August 12, 1808); feeling quite sure that the Senate, having to deal with a fact done, would ratify this appointment as soon as it was submitted to it. This moreover was the last favour he might have to ask of his party before returning to private life, and one not to be refused by it without making him very ridiculous in the eyes of Europe. These were considerations much too delicate to be very sensibly appreciated by Jefferson's friends: he had often, to curry favour with them, re-echoed their opinion that America ought not to extend its diplomatic relations, and that she might even, without any great inconvenience, recall, from motives of economy, the ministers she was salarying in foreign countries. The democratic party remained faithful to these principles. On March 8, 1809, Jefferson, then ex-President, had to write to

Mr. Short, who had already presented his credentials to the Emperor Alexander:—

It is with much concern I inform you that the Senate has negatived your appointment. We thought it best to keep back the nomination to the close of the session, that the mission might remain secret as long as possible, which you know was our purpose from the beginning. It was then sent in with an explanation of its object and motives. We **took for granted, if any hesitation should arise, that the Senate would take time, and that our friends in that body would make enquiries of us and give us the opportunity of explaining and removing objections. But to our great surprise, and with an unexampled precipitancy, they rejected it at once. This reception of the last of my official communications to them could not be unfelt, nor were the causes of it spoken out by them.***

A shocking act of ingratitude on the part of the democratic senators! The friends of Jefferson had certainly no reason to complain of him. He had always been faithful to them, and had served their interests so well that in the act of retiring he left them in undisputed possession of power. He had done much better for his party than his country, not through any culpable premeditation, but by a natural consequence of the principle which he had made the rule of his policy. He sincerely believed that the first duty of a republican government is to gratify the masses, 'to embody the will of the people.'† The people desired cheap government; Jefferson gave it them. Cheap government was incompatible with a state of military and naval defensive preparation; Jefferson proclaimed this system to be an antiquated absurdity, a barbarous

* Jefferson's Works, vol. v. p. 435.
† Ibid. vol. vii. p. 9.



traditional usage of the old world; he affirmed that America, 'after having taught so many useful lessons to Europe, might add that of showing her that there are peaceable means of repressing injustice, by making it the interest of the aggressor to do what is just, and abstain from future wrong;' * he invented the *embargo*. This cheap and pacific mode of putting down injustice cost the United States an annual loss of fifty millions of dollars, and led to a war which increased by sixty-three millions the national debt, in which Jefferson thought to effect a reduction of thirty-five millions by means of his ruinous economy. One would say, when studying the history of his administration, that he had made it a point to test the favourite maxims of the radical school. The result of the test was unfavourable to these maxims. The material and immediate consequences of their practical application have been prejudicial to the United States; the moral and remoter consequences to which they gave rise have been even worse. The executive power in that country has never recovered from the voluntary abasement into which it fell during Jefferson's presidency; it never resumed the position of dignity and independence which Jefferson was the cause of its losing, and it would be incapable at this day of exercising, over the popular will, that salutary control which the authors of the constitution intended to establish, and which Washington knew how to handle. The American democracy is now in possession of absolute power; it has no longer governors, it has only agents; moreover, it chooses them, not by reason of their intrinsic value, but by reason of their exact subserviency to every fluctuation of its will.

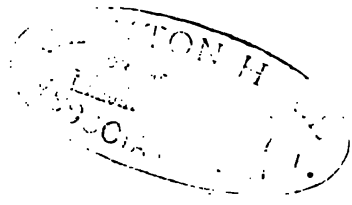
* Jefferson's Works, vol. v. p. 115.



Jefferson once said, and in this far be it from me to contradict him, 'There is a natural aristocracy among men. The grounds of this are virtue and talent. The natural aristocracy I consider as the most precious gift of nature, for the instruction, trusts, and government of society.' *

To judge by the experience of the United States, a democratical republic, such as Jefferson conceived and carried out, is one of the combinations the least calculated to secure such a result. The distance at which the enlightened and independent classes are kept in America from public affairs is, perhaps, of all contemporary facts, the one which inspires most uneasiness as to the future of this great country. It began to show itself under Jefferson's presidency, and was, in fact, the almost inevitable consequence of his principles and his policy.

* Jefferson's Works, vol. vi. p. 223; Letter to John Adams, October 28, 1813.



CHAPTER XI.

1809—1826.

JEFFERSON IN RETIREMENT — MONTICELLO — JEFFERSON AN AGRICULTURIST — HIS HOSPITALITY — HE IS FOND OF CONVERSATION AND DISLIKES DISCUSSION — IMPORTANCE WHICH HE ATTACHES TO AMIABLE MANNERS IN PRIVATE LIFE — HIS DAUGHTERS, AND HIS TENDER ATTENTIONS TO THEM — THE PURITY OF HIS MORALS AND THE SOUNDNESS OF HIS FAITH CALLED IN QUESTION BY THE NEWSPAPERS — HIS RELIGIOUS AND PHILOSOPHICAL INSTINCTS — HIS *ANAS* — ADVICE TO HIS PARTY — THE WAR OF 1812 — HIS HORROR OF THE DESPOTISM OF NAPOLEON — HIS CONFIDENCE IN THE ULTIMATE TRIUMPH OF FREE INSTITUTIONS IN EUROPE — IS ANXIOUS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE UNITED STATES — REMAINS PROFOUNDLY RADICAL — HIS EXERTIONS FOR THE PROMOTION OF PUBLIC EDUCATION AND MUNICIPAL INSTITUTIONS IN HIS STATE — FOUNDS THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA — ATTEMPTS TO APPLY RADICAL IDEAS IN THE EDUCATION OF YOUTH — HIS HOPES AND DISAPPOINTMENTS — BAD STATE OF HIS PRIVATE AFFAIRS — SALE OF HIS LIBRARY — HIS PROPERTY DISPOSED OF BY LOTTERY — FAILURE OF THE NATIONAL SUBSCRIPTION GOT UP IN HIS FAVOUR — HIS LAST ILLNESS — JEFFERSON AND JOHN ADAMS BOTH DIE ON JULY 4, 1826, THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE — CONCLUSION.

WHEN in the month of March 1809, Jefferson finally took leave of public life, into which he had entered forty years before, he was still in full possession of his popularity as well as of his faculties. He made way for his friends freely and with the best possible grace, before



the decline of age or the fickleness of fortune had warned him to return to his threshold; a sensible and prudent course, calculated to give him in his retirement a sort of preeminence without responsibility, of which he was the very man to appreciate the agreeableness, and to fulfill the delicate obligations. The perfect decorum which marks his withdrawal from public life continued to characterise the long years of his green old age. Of all the tests to which Jefferson was submitted, retirement is, perhaps, the one which he supported the best. In his relations with his old political subordinates, now become his successors, not the slightest trace of jealousy, depreciation, or arrogance, no affectation of directing them, and no hesitation to be of use to them by his counsels; nothing of indifference in his reserve, nor of pedantry in his advice; kindness, a sanguine interest, and a frankness that is often highly useful; in his relations with his old adversaries, much courtesy, often even a certain tone of careless freedom, without the slightest concession to their views; accessible to everybody, even to the curious and idle, but of a presence grave enough, and at times cold enough, to discourage familiarity; a large but not ostentatious retinue, a liberal hospitality supported by a ruinous expenditure without the appearance of profusion; perfectly in his place as the recent head of a State metamorphosed into a rural philosopher; living only one year too long, that last year, when the derangement of his fortune led him to occupy the attention of his fellow-citizens too much with his own private affairs, and to detail at too great a length the services which gave him a claim upon the gratitude of the United States; such were the distinguishing features of his seclusion.

Jefferson had already been engaged for forty years

in forming, improving, and embellishing the vast domain where he went and took up his residence after leaving Washington. The beauty of the site induced him as far back as 1769 to build a small pavilion on the summit of Monticello,—an elevated hill that is connected with the last spurs of the Alleghanies, whence the landscape — stretching, until the eye loses itself in the distance, from the Blue Ridge to Chesapeake Bay—is seen frequently transformed by the effects of mirage, which, by its wonderful 'illusions often adds to the variety and real grandeur of the view.' His imagination excited, probably, by this magic spectacle, Jefferson for an instant entertained the idea of making the decoration of his park compete with these fairy-like freaks of nature. A Greek temple, containing a bath, surmounted by a Chinese pagoda, and constantly enlivened by the sounds of an Æolian harp; an artificial grotto and cascade guarded by a sleeping nymph, with an English inscription in verse on the pedestal; Latin sentences cut into the trunks of trees; wild beasts in the sacred wood, and, to act as their monarch, a buck elk, still retaining much of its original wildness; farther on a little Gothic temple surrounded by family tombs; a pyramid of rocks raised to the memory of a faithful slave, and venerable trees to add to the majesty of the spot; such in 1771 were the ornaments with which in fancy he adorned the gardens of Monticello, such were the ambitious plans which he jotted down minutely in his pocket-book.* Practically he confined himself to somewhat enlarging his house, which, after his visit to Europe, he finally changed into a very agreeable villa, with a peristyle of much pretension, in singular contrast

* Randall's Life of Jefferson, vol. i. p. 61.



with the barbarous bareness of the houses which it was at that time customary to build in America.

Jefferson was as fond of agriculture as of architecture. In 1809, in spite of the injury done to his fortune by the financial affairs of the revolution, by his passion for building, by his taste for horses and books, by the carelessness of his managers, the supineness of his negroes, the insufficiency of his salary, and the effect of the embargo, he was still in possession of large agricultural resources; he had 10,000 acres of land, 200 slaves, 24 farm horses, 10 mules, 45 cows, 76 oxen, 98 sheep, 312 pigs, amounting in all to about 200,000 dollars. The '*Maison rustique of the* xix*th century*' informs us that he was the first to express the mathematical formula for the different curves that it was necessary to give the mould boards of ploughs in order to effect, under certain determinate conditions, the most economical application of power. He was well versed in the theory of agriculture; nor did he lack experience any more than science, and he had moreover a faculty of accurate observation. Very exact in noting all the facts which passed under his eyes; very methodical; careful to minuteness in keeping his accounts, his meteorological tables, and his botanical notes, he had formed a considerable collection of facts and processes relating to agriculture. He regularly noted down three times a day the state of his thermometer, and even in the midst of the political excitement of his youth, no one event ever could induce him to interrupt this habit, not even the debates in Congress on the declaration of independence. On July 4, 1776, the day when it was definitively adopted, the temperature was, at 1 o'clock P.M., at 76° of Fahrenheit; so says the pocket account-book of the author of the

'*declaration* of independence,' not omitting the morning's expenses: 'Paid for seven pair of women's gloves, 27*s.* Gave in charity, 1*s.* 6*d.*'* The indefatigable minuteness with which he observed and registered the most trifling economical and scientific facts, had enabled him to give himself a great treat at the close of his administration, and this was to write down, in his very best hand, an accurate record of the vegetable market in Washington during the eight years of his presidency; which shows, with reference to thirty-seven varieties of vegetables, the times of their earliest and latest appearance in the market within the period it embraces.†

A man is unfit for business, be it great or small, when he cannot descend to details; but in itself this taste for details is no more a certain indication of a practical mind than are well-kept books an infallible proof of good management. In spite of the variety of microscopic observations on rural matters, which he noted down, and in spite of the attention he paid to the most trifling items of expenditure, Jefferson had little aptness for agricultural pursuits. He was at once subject to fancies and fixed ideas; he wanted discernment in the choice of his servants; and the excess of his optimism was constantly tending, in despite of his ledger, to make him deceive himself as to the result of his operations, and the state of his fortune, to such an extent that he was always becoming more and more indebted, and always believing himself nearer the point of paying off his debts. Farming, moreover, was particular difficult at the moment when he embarked in it. In consequence of the rupture of all commercial relations between the

* Randall, vol. i. p. 179. † Ibid vol. i. p. 44.



United States and England, American products could no longer find markets; the most skillful and painstaking farmers were losing their money and their trouble. How then was Jefferson likely to succeed, he who had only an amateur's qualifications, and whose mind was filled with so many other subjects, politics, his books, his correspondence, his family, and his visitors?

The expression, a public man, is not a figure of speech in the United States. The public there requires to have, in those to whom it has been pleased to grant its highest favours, a real right of property, and an imprescriptible right too, which retirement itself cannot extinguish. A political leader, however small his reputation may be, escapes in America from the condition of a popular tool only to become a national curiosity, whom the first comer believes himself authorised to visit and to exhibit. Jefferson was, of all the presidents, the one who had first and most to suffer from this impertinent pretension. From all points of the Union, tourists poured in upon him, transforming Monticello at times into a real caravansary. Some were furnished with letters of introduction, and these expected to find a dinner and a bed; others brought nothing with them but their admiration as a reason for putting up their horses in the stable, and of installing themselves in the drawing-room. The greater number were content to wander through the gardens and through the house, looking out for a chance of meeting Jefferson in their way. Should this not occur soon enough, the most modest of the impatient gently put the door of his cabinet ajar to get a peep at his person; the more impudent smashed a pane in the window to be able to stare him out of countenance



at their ease. Jefferson was of an easy temper, and, in general, supported these ill-mannered intrusions with unruffled dignity. He could not, however, always avoid showing his displeasure. One evening, while seated with his family under his portico, two gigs drove up to the door; a person got down from the first, went straight up to Jefferson, and, without farther ceremony, said that he had come to claim for himself and friends the privilege which every American citizen had of presenting his respects to the President, and of visiting his abode. The sanguine stranger expected to be invited to stay the night; he got, for his only answer, this reply, 'I was not aware, sir, of the existence of the privilege to which you allude;' and he was obliged to withdraw without being able to prolong his visit. The lesson, unquestionably, was a very proper one, and is told us by a witness fully entitled to credit.* A clever panegyrist of Jefferson has thought it right, however, for the honour of his hero, to question the possibility of the fact, so decidedly does this little act of independence appear to be on the other side of the ocean, at this day, an offence to the majesty of the sovereign people. Rather than submit to these continuous inflictions, Jefferson, from time to time, fled from Monticello, and sought refuge at Poplar Forest, a more retired domain, where he had built a house in order to avoid, at least for several months in the year, the necessity of making his person a spectacle for idlers, and his fortune a prey to the over numerous guests whom his reputation procured him. 'Twelve years before his death,' writes Mr. Thomas Jefferson Randolph to Mr. Henry Randall, 'he remarked to me in conversation,

* Tucker, in his Life of Jefferson, vol. ii. p. 544.



that if he lived long enough he would beggar his family — that the number of persons he was compelled to entertain would devour his estate.'* And, in fact, he had sometimes to entertain more than fifty persons at once, almost all of them exceedingly fond of his European wines, and of his French kitchen, the only luxury in which he indulged, one, moreover, very rare at that time in the United States, and which the adversaries of the great *gallo-man* had even made a subject of reproach and ridicule: 'I do not approve,' said Patrick Henry, with that inimitable tone and look which gave effect to what he said, 'I do not approve of gentlemen abjuring their native victuals.'†

Jefferson, however, was very far from having completely emancipated himself from the manners of his race. He had preserved a somewhat reserved stiffness of manner which, at first sight, gave a false impression of his disposition; but he unbent and warmed up quickly, and, after a few moments' converse, spoke with the most amiable unrestraint. His political friends, indeed, charged him with being a little too communicative, and often putting himself in the power of persons not at all worthy of his confidence; the least word of agreement called forth his sympathy and animated him to talk; contradiction, on the contrary, chilled him. Jefferson was not fond of discussion; he had made it a rule during his whole life, both of policy and politeness, to avoid all direct discussion, believing himself better adapted to act by means of influence than by means of argument, and very much afraid, both on his own account and on that of others, of the little collisions which are the result of controversy. Thus he

* Randall, vol. iii. p. 676. † Ibid. vol. iii. p. 508.

established it as a principle that a well-bred man should contradict no one:—

'It was one of the rules,' he wrote to his grandson T. J. Randolph, 'which, above all others, made Doctor Franklin, the most amiable of men in society, never to contradict anybody. If he was urged to announce an opinion, he did it rather by asking questions, as if for information, or by suggesting doubts. When I hear another express an opinion, which is not mine, I say to myself, he has a right to his opinion, as I to mine; why should I question it? His error does me no injury, and shall I become a Don Quixote, to bring all men by force of argument to one opinion? If a fact be misstated, it is probable he is gratified by a belief of it, and I have no right to deprive him of the gratification. If he wants information, he will ask it, and then I will give it in measured terms; but if he still believes his own story, and shows a desire to dispute the fact with me, I hear him, and say nothing. It is his affair, not mine, if he prefers error.' *

It was to a boy of fifteen years that Jefferson preached this worldly indifference to the errors of others. Did he subordinate the love of virtue as well as the love of truth to ease and agreeableness of life? One is rather tempted to think so on reading the moral reflections which he made in reference to the education of the same boy:—

In the ensuing autumn, I shall be sending to Philadelphia a grandson of about fifteen years of age, to whom I shall ask your friendly attentions. Without that bright fancy which captivates, I am in hopes he possesses sound judgement and much observation, and, what I value more than all things, good humour. For thus I estimate the qualities of the mind: 1st, good humour; 2nd, integrity; 3rd, industry; 4th, science.

* Jefferson's Works, vol. v. p. 390; Letter to Mr. T. J. Randolph, November 24, 1808.



The preference of the first to the second quality, may not at first be acquiesced in; but certainly we had all rather associate with a good-humoured, light principled man, than with an ill-tempered rigorist in morality.*

A somewhat egotistical mode of appreciating characters, but which, at all events, shows the importance which Jefferson attached to gentleness of manners in the intercourse of private life. The pleasures of struggle and success in public life had never satisfied him. Even at the most brilliant moment of his career, he was seized with a passing disgust for politics, an insatiable yearning after domestic tranquillity.

'When,' he said in a letter to his grandson, Mr. Thomas Jefferson Randall, 'I look to the ineffable pleasure of my family society, I become more and more disgusted with the jealousies, the hatred, the rancorous and malignant passions of this scene, and lament my having been ever again drawn into public view. Tranquillity is now my object. I have seen enough of political honours to know that they are but a splendid torment, and, however one might be disposed to render services on which any of their fellow-citizens should set a value, yet, when as many would deprecate them as a public calamity, we may well entertain a modest doubt of their real importance, and feel the impulse of duty to be very weak.'†

And a little later, in 1799, in a letter to his younger daughter, Mrs. Maria Jefferson Eppes, he says:—

Without an object here which is not alien to me, and barren of every delight, I turn to your situation with pleasure, in the midst of a good family which loves you, and merits all your love. Go on, my dear, in cultivating the invaluable possession of their affections. The circle of our nearest connections is the only one in which a faithful and lasting

* Jefferson's Works, vol. v. p. 225; Letter to Dr. Rush, January 3, 1808.

† Randall, vol. ii. p. 358.

effect can be found, one which will adhere to us under all changes and chances. It is, therefore, the only soil on which it is worth while to bestow much culture.*

A widower at thirty-nine, and obliged to supply the place of a mother to two girls yet in their infancy, the only survivors of six children, Jefferson had reared them with a most earnest, vigilant, and rational tenderness. 'To you and your sister,' he said, 'I look to render the evening of my life serene and contented. Its morning has been clouded with loss after loss, till I have nothing left but you.'† His hope was not disappointed; they turned out charming and modest companions to him—too much respected to be often made the confidants of his political intrigues, calculations, and antipathies, but sufficiently loved to have the privilege of eliciting the highest and most elevated feelings.

In spite of repeated denials on the part of the family and friends of Jefferson, his opponents persist in affirming that these honourable ties did not satisfy him, but that he sought for lower pleasures in the society of his female slaves.‡ I neither will nor can decide this so much contested question, to which I merely make allusion here because it was so prominent a subject in the newspaper attacks of the day; revolting attacks, which history may not pass over in silence, be it for no other purpose than that of holding up to odium the coarseness which disfigured the political manners of the time.

It was not only into the most secret recesses of private life that party spirit went in quest of weapons;

* Randall, vol. ii. p. 481.

† Ibid. vol. i. p. 469; Letter to Martha Jefferson, March 28, 1787.

‡ [Though *now* 'more honoured in the breach than the observance,' this practice was the custom of the country at that time.]



it was even into the obscurer depths of the mind itself that they undertook to introduce the public, accustomed to submit purity of faith as well as purity of morals to the ordeal of a sort of popular inquisition. Jefferson was incessantly summoned before the bar of public opinion to answer for his religious sentiments. Such invasions of the rights of conscience at once revolted and disturbed him.* Not sufficiently bold to confront the pious despotism of public feeling, and nevertheless too proud to succumb to it, his only mode of protesting against these insidious enquiries into the state of his soul was by a systematic silence. Even in the midst of his own circle he said very little on the subject of his personal faith, as well out of regard for his children's freedom of thought as for his own. A few respectable common-places on the blessings of Christianity, inserted in his messages and addresses to Congress, these were the only professions of faith he had presented to the fastidious analysis of theologians. By birth, moreover, a member of the Episcopal Church, he punctually attended the Anglican worship; he contributed regularly to the support of the pastor of his parish; he subscribed generously towards the building and repairs of churches in his county: but this outward conformity to religious duties deceived no one. It was impossible to forget his intimate relations with the philosophical circle in France, the excessive kindness with which, to the great annoyance even of his daughters, he had treated Thomas Paine; the friendship he had professed for Priestly; the pertinacity with which he had refused, when President, to proclaim public fasts and prayers; and finally, the vehement zeal he had

* Jefferson's Works, vol. iv. pp. 477, 478, 480.

shown in effecting the complete separation of Church and State in Virginia. Jefferson, therefore, passed for an 'infidel,' and, as such, had been often exposed to insults from the pulpit, or to be persecuted, even in his retirement, by the holy benevolence of obstinate converters. Outwardly unmoved, he seemed to meet these public insults with nothing but haughty indifference, and this prying impertinence of zeal with nothing but freezing politeness; but his anger against the clergy was not at all the less strong for being thus apparently suppressed; it amounted sometimes to rage. All the old vocabulary of insults gathered together by the libertines of all times was secretly employed by him, and his only consolation was to 'consider reformation and redress as desperate, and abandon them to the Quixotism of more enthusiastic minds;' * to call in an under tone 'necromancers, mountebanks, charlatans, and pharisees,' † those who designated 'him as atheist, deist, and devil.' ‡ Mr. Short, his former Secretary of Legation in Paris, and John Adams, his rival in 1801, now become his friend again, had the especial privilege of reading his confidential imprecations against Christian churches, and societies of all kinds, Catholic or Presbyterian, Calvinist or American, Quaker or Jesuit. No more clergy, no more evangelical missions to pagan nations, no more sects, no more dogmas — this was the burden which his pen was constantly inditing, under the influence of a sort of senile monomania. § Unitarians of

* Jefferson's Works, vol. vi. p. 43; Letter to Mr. Charles Cass, January 29, 1815. Also, vol. vii. p. 257; Letter to Dr. Waterhouse, July 29, 1822.

† Ibid. vol. vi. p. 413.

‡ Ibid. vol. vii. p. 23.

§ Ibid. vol. v. p. 492; vol. v. p. 412; vol. vii. pp. 28, 43, 62, 66, 127, 128, 157.



Channing's school alone met with any favour from him, and even they were found fault with for having too ardent a faith, too complete a system, and too fixed ideas.* Jefferson's contempt for metaphysics almost equalled his hatred for theology. He had on philosophical and religious questions merely vague † and often contradictory impressions, which he frequently expressed without the slightest attention to propriety of terms or natural connection of ideas. He, by turns, styled himself an Epicurean ‡ and a Christian, § a Materialist ‖ and an advocate of the immortality of the soul. ¶ Essentially, and in point of fact, he was a free-thinker, without method or doctrine, who attached importance to two points only—the obliteration of all respect for the supernatural, and the maintenance of the moral law. His asserted Christianity did not extend beyond a patronizing assent to some of the moral precepts of Christ.

During his presidency in 1803, in the interval between reading a despatch and a newspaper, he had devoted some hours to cutting out from the Gospels, and pasting in a small note-book, the passages which appeared to him 'of fine imagination, correct morality, and the most lovely benevolence;' rejecting as unworthy of the

* Jefferson's Works, vol. vii. pp. 210, 245, 252, 266, 269.

† Jefferson thus wrote on May 16, 1820, to General Taylor:—'Whatever my religious creed may be—and perhaps I do not exactly know myself—it is a pleasure to reflect that my conduct has not brought discredit to my friends.' See his Works, vol. vii. p. 163.

‡ Ibid. vol. vii. p. 138: 'As you say of yourself,' he writes to Short on Oct. 31, 1819, 'I am an Epicurean.' See also vol. iv. p. 479; vol. vi. p. 518.

§ 'I am a real Christian,' he writes to Mr. Thompson, vol. vi. p. 518.

‖ 'I am a Materialist,' vol. vii. p. 156, 170, 252.

¶ Ibid. vol. v. p. 422; vol. vi. p. 210; vol. vii. p. 169.

teacher, 'a mass of others, of so much ignorance, so much absurdity, so much untruth, charlatanism, and imposture,' as to make it impossible that such contradictions should have proceeded from the same being.* Having done this, Jefferson then drew up what he called 'a syllabus of an estimate of the merit of the doctrines of Jesus compared with those of others,' a summary which he solemnly presented in 1803 to his daughter, Mrs. Martha Jefferson Randolph, as containing the declaration of his own faith, and as a complete answer to the pious 'libels' which had been published against him,† but which he subsequently gave Mr. Short, describing it as a simple analysis of a system formerly professed by a good man but little learned, and in the smallest possible degree a visionary, whose opinions he did not entirely adopt, but whom he thought it right to defend against the charge of imposture, to which the fabulous narratives and theological lucubrations of certain false disciples, stupid or knavish, ignorant men or platonists, had exposed him. 'Of this band of dupes and impostors Paul was the great Coryphæus, and first corrupter of the doctrines of Jesus.'‡

Plato, Calvin, and Montesquieu shared with St. Paul the privilege of incurring the reprobation of Jefferson. §

* Jefferson's Works, vol. vii. p. 156; Letter to Short, April 23, 1820.

† Randall's Life of Jefferson, vol. iii. pp. 45, 556. [He explains his motive for doing so thus: 'A promise made to a friend some years ago, but executed lately, has placed my religion on paper. I have thought it just that my family, by possessing this, should be able to estimate the libels published against me, on this as on every possible subject.']

‡ Jefferson's Works, vol. vii. pp. 156, 164; vol. vi. p. 354.

§ Ibid. vol. vii. pp. 165, 286; vol. v. p. 354; vol. iv. pp. 114, 374, 376; vol. v. pp. 219, 535, 539.

If this free-thinking democrat could not succeed in finding any precise formula by which to express his philosophical impressions, he at all events was able to discover with great clearness who, in religious metaphysics and history, were his chief opponents and his chief friends. He admired the materialist ideology and republican politics of M. de Tracy with an ardour due and proportioned to the hatred he entertained for the great representatives of spiritualism, doctrinal Protestantism, and limited monarchy. Not only had he caused the 'Essay on the Genius and Works of Montesquieu * to be translated, as the best work yet written on the science of government, but he had revised the translation himself, and openly expressed his desire to see it in the hands of every American youth. † In spite of his extravagant enthusiasm for M. de Tracy's work, however, he could not so completely abandon the good sense natural to his race, as to accept the extreme consequences of his favourite author's principles. It little mattered to him that the idea of a republic, one and indivisible, and that of an executive directory, were corollaries of the democratic theory; he at once rejected them as dangerous and absurd. ‡ In vain did the moral code of

* Mr. Destutt de Tracy, knowing the imperial régime too well to venture upon publishing his book in Europe, and under his own name, sent the MS. to Jefferson, with a request that he would have it translated and published in America (1810). Jefferson did so, and the translation was thus published, under his auspices and after being revised by him, several years before the original; and when the latter appeared at Liege in 1817, it was described by the publisher as the translation of a work 'printed in America, under the auspices of the celebrated Mr. Jefferson.'

† Jefferson's Works, vol. v. pp. 535, 539, 551, 566; vol. vi. pp. 98, 109, 296, 561, 568.

‡ Ibid. vol. v. p. 567; Letter to Tracy, Jan. 26, 1814.

self-interest proclaim itself the lawful child of materialism; he repelled it as inefficient and unserviceable, without any scruples about logic.*

Even M. de Tracy himself could not long command Jefferson's attention to pure theories: 'I am not,' said he, 'fond of reading what is merely abstract, and unapplied immediately to some useful science.' † This taste for the positive, especially towards the close of his life, runs through all his literary criticisms. He read much, and on all subjects, but far more for the pleasure of acquiring knowledge than that of gratifying his admiration and his feelings. Works of imagination were not appreciated by him, save when, as in comedy, satire, or moral tales, they were of an instructive kind. Any composition essentially romantic seemed to him more or less ridiculous or dangerous, especially for women. No romance, but little poetry, an accurate knowledge of French, 'as being especially the language of the exact sciences;' some little acquaintance with drawing and music; sound principles of domestic economy,—such was the amount of advice he gave a father in 1818 respecting the education of his daughters. ‡

Jefferson himself made no pretensions to literary merit. He had written a good deal, but without paying any great attention to finish or even correctness of language. To go straight to the mark, to express himself naturally and clearly,—this was his only rule and aim. In his state papers, in his 'Notes on Virginia,' in the fragments of his memoirs, in his 'Anas,' in his private correspondence, his style is at all times simple,

* Jefferson's Works, vol. vii. pp. 4, 39.

† Ibid. vol. vii. p. 39; Letter to Adams, Oct. 14, 1816.

‡ Ibid. vol. vii. p. 102; Letter to Mr. Burwell, March 14, 1818.

sometimes very nervous and very *piquant*, but rarely elevated. In a word, he was expert enough in the language of science and business.

Public affairs, and the part he himself had played in them, continued to occupy much of his attention in his retirement. The well-merited popularity at that time of Marshall's 'Life of Washington,' a book extremely damaging to the democratic party, caused him much anxiety and annoyance. Feeling how urgent it was to administer 'an antidote'* to public opinion, he attempted to get up a democratic historian in the person of the Jacobin poet, Joel Barlow, the popular author of a song in honour of the guillotine, set to the air of 'God save the King.' Barlow, tempted for an instant by the prospect of insulting the Federalists, soon afterwards gave up the idea in order to enter the diplomatic service. Thus left without an historian, and determined nevertheless not to be left without an avenger; too fond of repose to write himself and in his own lifetime the annals of the republic; too much of a party man to abandon the idea of tarnishing, by a permanent stain, the memory of his adversaries; Jefferson set himself to work sifting his papers and his recollections for the elements of a posthumous libel. He had from his youth a taste for small facts, and the habit of noting down in writing what he heard in conversation. His notes came opportunely to the aid of his memory when enfeebled by age. During Washington's presidency, he had made a collection of the political gossip of New York and Philadelphia, putting it down under its proper date, pell-mell with his conversations and opinions, as Secretary of State. This singular medley

* Jefferson's Works, vol. v. pp. 587, 476, 496; Letter to Barlow, April 16, 1811.

of serious documents and obsolete slander, put together without the slightest attention to classification or order, was the source from which he drew his statements designed for the use of posterity. After eliminating from his memorandum-books whatever was devoid of political interest, whatever could not serve to impart an English and royal tint to the friends of Washington, after choosing from among the most compromising acts and language attributed to the 'monocrats,' such as at seventy-five years of age recurred to him as true or probable, he gathered together, under the title of 'Anas,'* all the fragments which his revision had spared. He prefaced them with a short historical notice, intended to prepare the way for the impression he desired should be produced by the numerous anecdotes thus insidiously brought into contact, and it is in this collection of minute facts, which, true or false, tend equally to disfigure the intentions of the Federalists, that their detractors have recourse to at this hour, when looking out for the means of attacking them.

While Jefferson was thus secretly affording this miserable gratification to his hatred of vanquished competitors, he was keeping up the most friendly correspondence with Adams. He spoke to him of their past differences of opinion in a tone both of superiority and liberality; and when his aged antagonist, still fiery and combative at eighty years of age, showed too much eagerness to renew the discussion, he declined all useless controversy, with the natural dignity of a man of good company, and a successful opponent.†

It was with the same air of superiority that he

* Jefferson's Works, vol. xi. pp. 87–211.

† Ibid. vol. vi. pp. 125–127, 142–146, 155, 227; vol. vii. p. 314.

rebuked the democrats for their intestine quarrels, that he interposed his good offices between their rival leaders, that he represented to the old supporters of his cause how much the motives for differing were inferior to the reasons for uniting, still labouring at a distance to rally the army he no longer commanded. While himself leading it to battle, he could not have spoken to it in a loftier tone of the great results possible for it to accomplish by unity of action; he could not have shown himself more severe in matters of discipline; he could not have insisted with more energy on the duties of a party-man than he did in 1811, in order to consolidate the authority of Madison, his successor in the presidency:—

'If we schismatize,' he wrote to Colonel W. Duane, 'on either men or measures, if we do not act in phalanx, as when we rescued it from the satellites of monarchism,—I will not say our *party*, the term is false and degrading,—but our nation will be undone. For the republicans are the nation. . . . The last hope of human liberty in this world rests on us. We ought, for so dear a state, to sacrifice every attachment and every enmity. Leave the President free to choose his own coadjutors, to pursue his own measures, and support him and them; even if we think we are wiser than they, honester than they are, or possessing more enlarged information of the state of things. If we move in mass, be it ever so circuitously, we shall attain our object; but if we break into squads, every-one pursuing the path he thinks most direct, we become an easy conquest to those who can now barely hold us in check. . . . . I repeat again, that we ought not to schismatize on either men or measures. Their conclusions necessarily follow the false bias of their principles. I claim, however, no right of guiding the conduct of others. . . . As far as my good will may go — for I can no longer act — I shall adhere to my government, executive and legislative; and, as

long as they are republican, I shall go with their measures, whether I think them right or wrong.'*

Jefferson gave his support to the warlike policy of Madison in 1812; did he think it good or bad? It was very contrary to the 'Quaker system'† of government, which he had himself put in practice for eight years, and which he had since preached up to Madison as the one most useful to the country, and most convenient to those who governed it. To extinguish the public debt, such was, in his eyes, the first concern of the nation;‡ to protect American commerce from the spoliations of France and England by means of embargoes only; to reply to the insolence of the belligerents merely by diplomatic notes and custom-house regulations; to manœuvre to gain time until the reestablishment of a general peace; such, according to him, was the only reasonable course to pursue in fixing the relations of his country with Europe. Accordingly, almost the only thing he regretted in the past was those acts of his government, by which, under popular pressure, he had derogated from these pacific principles;§ congratulating himself, however, on never having been dragged into a war by these unavoidable mistakes, and wishing Madison a similar good fortune, but without entertaining any great hopes of it:—

'If peace can be preserved,' he wrote March 17, 1809, 'I hope and trust you will have a smooth administration. I know no government which would be so embarrassing in war as ours. This would proceed very much from the lying and

* Jefferson's Works, vol. v. pp. 577, 593; Letters to Col. Duane, March 28 and April 30, 1811.

† Ibid. vol. v. p. 506; Letter to Kosciusko, April 13, 1811.

‡ Ibid. vol. v. p. 447; Letter to Gallatin, Oct. 11, 1809.

§ Ibid. vol. v. pp. 472, 511, 529; vol. vi. pp. 53, 63.



licentious character of our papers; but much, also, from the wonderful credulity of the members of Congress in the floating lies of the day. . . .. The evil, too, increases greatly with the protraction of the session, and I apprehend, in case of war, their session would have a tendency to become permanent.'*

The prudent Madison was in no greater hurry than his predecessor to involve himself in such embarrassments; moreover, he knew very well that war with Great Britain would be the condemnation of the system of unarmed peace, to which he had given his support; that it would prove the uselessness of embargoes; and that it would find America very ill-prepared to maintain the struggle. This struggle, nevertheless, was daily becoming more difficult to stave off. The radical defect of the policy adopted by Jefferson was precisely that of necessarily bringing about in time the evil which it desired to avoid at any price. The successive humiliations and sacrifices to which it subjected the country, in order to spare it the necessity of unsheathing its sword, could end in nothing but increasing the contempt of the English for America, and the hatred of the Americans for England. A powerful and resistless war party had, in fact, sprung up in the midst of the democratic party. Madison perceived that his re-election for the presidency would be endangered if he did not yield to the current; he therefore drifted away with it. Like him, Jefferson had made it a rule never to separate himself from the masses. 'Some friends, indeed, have left me by the way, seeking by a different political path the same object — their country's good — which I pursued with the crowd along the common

* Jefferson's Works, vol. v. p. 437.

highway.'* He hailed the war with enthusiasm, and his optimist imagination immediately portrayed to him the English and Spanish driven from the American continent;† Great Britain, overthrown by an internal revolution, then brought by its trials to a sense of justice, and no longer influencing the affairs of the world, save for the purpose of maintaining their equilibrium, and of keeping in order 'her old rival in wickedness.'‡ Nothing could stop him in his dreams of victory. No doubt the enemy would be mistress of the sea, but the United States might and ought to give it up to her; they had nothing to do with a navy; only the supporters of Great Britain could advise them to contend with her on her own element; the element of the Americans was the American soil, and upon the American soil they must be irresistible.§ The invasion of Canada would be merely a march; Halifax would give a little more trouble, but would only be the affair of a few months; New York might be burnt by the British fleet, but could not the Federal government, in its turn, burn down London by means of English hirelings, easily to be found amid a starving and corrupt population?‖ The sword was now drawn; it was necessary that full justice should be inflicted. No truce, no stopping, before getting Canada, as an indemnity for thousands of American vessels captured by British cruisers, and for the six thousand sailors impressed by them, before obtaining full security for every man sailing under the American

* Jefferson's Works, vol. v. p. 499.
† Ibid. vol. vi. p. 79; Letter to Thos. Letre, Aug. 8, 1812.
‡ Ibid. vol. vi. p. 33; Letter to Dr. Crawford, January 2, 1812.
§ Ibid. vol. vi. p. 68; Letter to Gen. Kosciusko, June 25, 1812.
‖ Ibid. vol. vi. p. 75; Letter to Col. Duane, Aug. 4, 1812.



flag; this done, peace with Great Britain and war with France.*

A few weeks scarcely had passed away when the event scattered to the winds these flattering illusions of a somewhat childish patriotism, and showed the emptiness of these rash speculations respecting the issue of the war. During almost the whole period of hostilities Jefferson was forced to declaim against 'the treachery, incapacity, or cowardice'† of the generals whose triumphal march he had celebrated by anticipation, and, not without a certain degree of effort, to rejoice at the glorious achievements of the little navy, the increase of which he had always checked, as he had predicted its ill success.‡ His warlike ardour soon vanished; he gave up prophesying the fall of the English possessions in North America, and devoted himself to bitter complaints about the ruin of the planters, the weight of taxation, the 'financial extravagance of Congress,'§ 'the silly bragging of the press.'‖ And when the city of Washington was taken and burnt almost without opposition, under the eyes of the President himself, the old patriot was sighing so anxiously for peace as to look upon this shameful check as a salutary mortification.¶

On November 22, 1814, he wrote to Mr. Short, with a sort of mournful courage:—

* Jefferson's Works, vol. vi. p. 78; Letter to Mr. Wright, Aug. 8, 1812.

† Ibid. vol. vi. pp. 80, 106, 110; Letter to Colonel Duane, April 4, 1813.

‡ Ibid. vol. vi. pp. 106, 110, 112; Letter to Colonel Munroe.

§ Ibid. vol. vi. p. 400; Letter to Mr. Short, November 28, 1814.

‖ Ibid. vol. vi. p. 408; Letter to Colonel Munroe, January 1, 1815.

¶ Ibid. vol. vi. p. 408.

These are my views of the war. They embrace a great deal of sufferance, trying privations, and no benefit but that of teaching our enemy that he is never to gain by wanton injuries on us. To me this state of things brings a sacrifice of all tranquillity and comfort through the residue of life. For although the debility of age disables me from the services and sufferings of the field, yet by the total annihilation in value of the produce which was to give me subsistence and independence, I shall be like Tantalus,—up to the shoulders in water, yet dying with thirst. . . . But although we feel, we shall not flinch. We must consider now, as in the revolutionary war, that, although the evils of resistance are great, those of submission would be greater.*

And to M. Correa de Serra on December 27, 1814, he also wrote as follows:—

Indemnity for the past, and security for the future, which was our motto at the beginning of this war, must be adjourned to another, when, disarmed and bankrupt, our enemy shall be less able to insult and plunder the world with impunity. This will be after my time. One war, such as that of our revolution, is enough for one life. Mine has been too much prolonged to make me the witness of a second, and I hope for a *coup de grâce* before a third shall come upon us. If, indeed, Europe has matters to settle, which may reduce this *hostis humani generis* to a state of peace and moral order, I shall see that with pleasure, and then sing, with old Simeon, *Nunc dimittis, Domine.* For yourself, *cura ut valeas, et me, ut amaris, ama.*†

As Jefferson had foreseen, the American government was obliged to bring the war to a close without obtaining the object for which it was undertaken. Its principal pretext was the impressment of its sailors, which, since the year 1793, had been a continued

* Jefferson's Works, vol. vi. pp. 400, 401.

† Ibid. vol. vi. p. 407; Letter to M. de Serra, December 27, 1814.

subject of dispute between the United States and England, and the final settlement of which had always been held up by the democratic party as a *sine quâ non* of any diplomatic arrangement with Great Britain. But the treaty of Ghent, no more than that of 1794, so vehemently attacked by Jefferson, no more than that of 1806, so inconsiderately rejected by him, contained the slightest stipulation on the subject. This treaty, however, was 'welcome' * at Monticello, and all the more so on account of its reaching him together with the unhoped-for news that the war had finished with a glorious achievement, happening too late to influence the negotiations at Ghent, but sufficiently striking to be of much more value to the American people than a good peace. It is in fact to the victory of New Orleans that the moral impression left on the world by the war of 1812 is in great part due,—a war imprudently engaged in, feebly conducted, rarely fortunate, very costly, completely barren in diplomatic results, and yet ultimately useful to the prestige of the United States, as it was rich in lessons absolutely necessary to them. Their militia had often been beaten, and sometimes in a shameful way; but, thanks to General Jackson, the world was left under the impression of the marvellous things it could accomplish when headed by a popular and intrepid leader. Their insufficient navy had by degrees been almost entirely driven from the ocean by superior force; but before yielding to numbers it had captured more than seventeen ships of war from the first maritime nation of the world. Their debt was considerably augmented; but they had learnt how costly cheap government is, and also the exact worth of

* Jefferson's Works, vol. vi. p. 450; Letter to General Deaborne, March 17, 1815.

a Quaker policy. It is from the war of 1812 that the respect of England for the United States dates, and also what Jefferson sorrowfully called 'the naval mania of his fellow-citizens,*—a double blessing, for which the United States, in point of fact, have nothing to thank the administration, which procured it for them without wishing for and without foreseeing it.'

The greatly increased hatred of Great Britain raised in Jefferson's breast by the war had not in the least reconciled him to the tyranny of Napoleon. The abuses of the empire excited a generous indignation in him which burst forth in terms much overcharged, and at the sincere extravagance of which we are this day obliged to smile, but which for all this are not the less a striking proof of the horror Napoleon at that time inspired in those friends of liberty, who the least suffered by his gigantic follies, and who seemed the most likely to be touched by the grandeur of his genius and destiny. After his abdication at Fontainebleau, Jefferson wrote to Mr. Short: 'You intimate a possibility of your return to France, now that Buonaparte is put down. I do not wonder at it: France, freed from that monster, must again become the most agreeable country on earth.'† The joy he felt at the 'fall of the beast'‡ was disturbed by nothing but the fear that it might not be final. It saddened him to see the old mistrust and hostility between the royalists and liberals reviving; he was made anxious by the acerbity with which M. de Lafayette already spoke in his letters 'of the illegalities of a charter in which the sovereignty of the people was denied, and of the

* Jefferson's Works, vol. vi. p. 211; Letter to General Duane.

† Ibid. vol. vi. p. 402; November 28, 1814.

‡ Ibid. vol. vi. p. 421.



improprieties, shortcomings, and impracticabilities of this royal handiwork.' * He reminded him of, and mildly repeated to him, the prudent advice, unhappily too little attended to, which he had given in 1789; he besought him not to be too aspiring on the subject of liberty, nor too exacting from the Bourbons; he insisted on the necessity of educating France in liberal ideas; he warned him that 'if liberty, instead of taking root and growth in the progress of reason, is recovered by mere force or accident, it becomes, with an unprepared people, a tyranny still, of the many, the few, or the one.' †

And to Dupont de Nemours on February 28, 1815, he says:—

> I have to congratulate you, which I do sincerely, on having got back, from Robespierre and Buonaparte, to your anti-revolutionary condition. You are now nearly where you were at the *jeu de paume* on June 20, 1789. The king would then have yielded by convention, freedom of religion, freedom of the press, trial by jury, *habeas corpus*, and a representative legislature. These I consider as the essentials constituting free government. . . . Although I do not think the late capitulation of the king quite equal to all this. . . . I am in hopes your patriots may, by constant and prudent pressure, obtain from him what is still wanting to give you a temperate degree of freedom and security. Should this not be done, I should really apprehend a relapse into discontent which might again let in Buonaparte.‡

In less than three months afterwards, Dupont de Nemours, disgusted at the indifference with which

* Mémoires de Lafayette, tom. v. p. 488; Lettre à Jefferson, Août 14, 1814.

† Jefferson's Works, vol. vi. p. 421; Letter to Lafayette, February 14, 1815.

‡ Ibid. vol. vi. p. 428.

France had let the Bourbons depart and Buonaparte return, and tired, as he said himself, 'of passing in one day from one hand to another, like a courtezan,' reached the United States, where Jefferson received him with these sorrowing words: 'You despair of your country, and so do I. A military despotism is now fixed upon it permanently.' *

All those who have despaired of France have invariably found themselves in the wrong at last. Thirty-two years of good and free government have reversed the melancholy sentence pronounced on her by one of her most hopeful friends. Jefferson, in fact, did not wait for happier days to find grounds of hope for France; he pressed heavily upon her in the midst of the humiliating trials drawn down upon her by the government of the hundred-days, but even then he saw reason to believe that she would be again upraised by liberty.

'I grieve for France,' he wrote to Mr. Gallatin, October 16, 1815, 'although it cannot be denied that, by the afflictions with which she wantonly and wickedly overwhelmed other nations, she has merited severe reprisals. For it is no excuse to lay the enormities to the wretch who led to them, and who has been the author of more misery and suffering to the world than any being who ever lived before him. After destroying the liberties of his country, he has exhausted all its resources, physical and moral, to indulge his own maniac ambition, his own tyrannical and overbearing spirit. His sufferings cannot be too great; but theirs I sincerely deplore . . . and I trust they will finally establish for themselves a government of rational and well-tempered liberty; so much science cannot be lost; so much light shed over them can never fail to produce to them some good in the end.†

* Jefferson's Works, vol. vi. p. 457; Letter to Dupont de Nemours, May 15, 1815.

† Ibid. vol. vi. p. 499.

And when John Adams saw in our misfortunes the confirmation of the melancholy anticipations he had formerly communicated to Dr. Price as to the issue of the French revolution, Jefferson wrote to him :—

> But although your prophecy has proved true so far, I hope it does not preclude a better final result. . . . The idea of representative government has taken root and growth among them. Their masters feel it, and are saving themselves by timely offers of this modification of their powers . . . illusive probably at first, but it will grow into power in the end. Opinion is power, and that opinion will come. Even France will yet attain representative government. You observe it makes the basis of every constitution which has been demanded or offered,—of that demanded by their Senate—of that offered by Buonaparte—and of that granted by Louis XVIII. The idea then is rooted and will be established, although rivers of blood may yet flow between them and their object.*

This valiant confidence in the triumph of free institutions had yet to receive a mournful blow. America herself became the occasion of most anxious apprehensions, which contributed to poison Jefferson's latter years, now old, infirm in health, and ruined. As long as he continued actively engaged in the internal affairs of the Union, he had laboured, and successfully laboured, to give popular passions other motives, political factions other grounds of action, than those rivalries between state and state, which are the stumbling-blocks of Federal republics. He had certainly not repressed the antagonism of feelings and interests existing between the North and South ; he had not even abstained from occasionally turning it to the promotion of his own purposes ; but by taking, as the principal lever of his policy,

* Jefferson's Works, vol. vi. p. 525, January 11, 1816.

the ideas common to a whole class of minds scattered indiscriminately through the States, he had accustomed parties to consider themselves as the representatives, not of a geographical region, but of a general principle or interest, and to contend against each other without compromising the Union. This, in fact, had been the work that was really his own. He saw it annihilated by the famous disputes respecting slavery to which the admission of Missouri into the Union gave rise, unfortunate disputes, which, by making questions of preponderance between the North and South the great business and the really distinctive feature of parties, have thrust back the American confederation into the dangerous rut from which it has never again extricated itself. The old patriot uttered a cry eloquent with alarm and indignation:—

'Although I had laid down as a law to myself,' he wrote on April 13, 1820, to Mr. Short, 'never to write, talk, or even think of politics, to know nothing of public affairs, and therefore had ceased to read newspapers, yet the Missouri question aroused and filled me with alarm. The old schism of Federal and Republican threatened nothing, because it existed in every state, and united them together by the fraternism of party. But the coincidence of a marked principle, moral and political, with a geographical line, once conceived, I feared would never more be obliterated from the mind; that it would be recurring on every occasion and renewing irritations, until it would kindle such mutual and mortal hatred, as to render separation preferable to eternal discord. I have been among the most sanguine in believing that our Union would be of long duration; I now doubt it much. . . . One only comfort and confidence is, that I shall not live to see this; and I envy not the present generation the glory of throwing away the fruits of their fathers' sacrifices of life and fortune, and of rendering desperate the experiment which was to decide ultimately whether man is capable of self-



government. This treason against human hope will signalise their epoch in future history, as the counterpart of the medal of their predecessors.'*

The phantom of dismemberment which had assumed such a character of reality in Jefferson's eyes could not, however, dispel from his mind that spectre of centralisation and oligarchy which he had so long been in the habit of invoking for the need and necessities of his cause. To put his political friends on their guard against the dangers to which the irremovability of the Federal judges exposed democratic institutions — to point out the members of the Supreme Court as internal enemies, incessantly occupied in secretly undermining state rights —this was an old habit, become at last the monomania of an idle and active-minded old man. The more Jefferson withdrew himself from public affairs, the more did his radicalism assume a character of absoluteness. In the midst of his fields, he went back to the first principles of his political views, and deduced extreme consequences from them, with a logical severity that alarmed his most enthusiastic admirers. In spite of the impatient desire felt by some of his Virginian friends to introduce new reforms into the constitution of their state, they determined not to effect them during his lifetime, fearing they should be overpowered by the influence of those radical doctrines, which the illustrious solitary of Monticello was developing, and buzzing into the ear of every fresh comer.† In spite of their democratic fervour, the great Virginian planters were still proud of having been once aristocrats, and of being still able to point to some traces of the old system in the administrative organiza-

* Jefferson's Works, vol. vii. p. 158.

† Tucker's Life of Jefferson, vol. ii. p. 433.

tion of their state. How could they fail to be somewhat surprised at hearing that traditions have nothing respectable in them—that the duration of institutions must be limited to that of the generation which conceived them—and that, in consequence, all human society must be a *tabula rasa* of the past every nineteen years! * And Jefferson did not stop even there; he boldly asserted the best taxes to be those which, falling exclusively on the rich, perform the office of an agrarian law; † that the best republic is that in which 'every citizen has an equal share in the management of public affairs;' ‡ the best governments those which the people reduce to the condition of agents;' § and he consequently declared himself in favour of the principle of universal suffrage, ‖ of turning representatives into mere delegates, ¶ and of electing these for short periods. ** Falling from his lips, or pen, such professions of faith, though communicated in confidence, would necessarily find their way to the public. And yet the indiscreet, though sagacious politician, knew very well that in Virginia 'many good people would revolt from such doctrines,' †† and that they would be prejudicial to the two only projects which he had really at heart, to the two measures which he regarded as the sheet-anchors of the safety of the republic; and at the

* Works of Jefferson, vol. vii. p. 15, 16; Letter to Samuel Kerchival, July 12, 1816.

† Ibid. vol. v. pp. 584, 586; vol. vii. p. 110.

‡ Ibid. vol. vii. p. 10; Letter to Samuel Fierchival, July 12, 1816.

§ Ibid. vol. vi. pp. 213, 604, 608; vol. vii. pp. 9–17, 35–37, 319.

‖ Ibid. vol. vii. p. 13; July 12, 1816.

¶ Ibid. vol. vi. p. 605; May 28, 1816.

** Ibid. vol. vi. p. 213; vii. pp. 11, 12.

†† Ibid. vol. vii. p. 35.



consummation of which he declared he was determined to aim 'until his last sigh,'—the developement of public education and the subdivision of counties into municipal districts.*

These two questions had been for a long time linked together in his mind. From 1776 to 1779, while engaged together with Messrs. Pendleton, Lee, Mason, and Wythe, in endeavouring to harmonize the old legislative code of Virginia with its new institutions, he had sketched out the plan of a general system of public education, according to which each county would have been divided into districts, of such a size that the children in each would be within an easy distance of the district school. But the bill for this purpose was not passed until 1796; Jefferson was not able to attend to all its details, and the legislature had introduced a clause into it which rendered the intention of the bill nugatory; it had, in fact, impliedly given the county courts the privilege of not carrying out the law, by empowering them to fix the day that it was to be brought into operation in their district,† an inconsiderate provision, and all the more unwise, inasmuch as the residents in the counties had no means of acting on their magistrates, and the latter were in general little zealous in the cause of popular instruction.

The parochial system of New England, such as M. de Tocqueville has so well described it, cannot furnish any idea of the administrative system then existing in Virginia. Between the state and the citizen, there was no other intermediate power than the county court, a judicial and administrative body, invested with functions that made it at once supreme

* Jefferson's Works, vol. vi. p. 311; vol. v. p. 525.

† Ibid. vol. i. pp. 47-48; Autobiography.

and irresponsible. Composed of self-elected magistrates, it had the right, in an area of territory often more extensive than a French *arrondissement*, to determine all questions of a judicial nature, to exercise control over the constabulary, the public roads, and the militia; it had power to make appointments to all subordinate offices, both military and civil, and to fix the amount of local taxation. In fact it had, of itself, and without responsibility, the entire management of the affairs of the county. Such an arrangement was most certainly open to objections.* The authority of the municipal body extended over too large an area, and operated by means of a small oligarchy, too restricted in number and much too absolute; hence the interests and wishes of those subject to it might too easily, either, never come to its knowledge, or be disregarded by it; there was no local vitality, and indifference to political matters was common to the bulk of the people; but Virginia was accustomed to this aristocratic system, and had a liking for it. In fact, abuses were rare; the defect in the law for establishing public schools was much more the fault of the legislature than the county courts, and, even though the case had been quite the reverse, there could not be a more certain way of compromising the fate of the school system, than by undisguisedly associating it with an intended radical reform in the administrative institutions of the state; or of provoking opposition to the creation of educational districts, than by declaring that it was purposed to make them the nuclei of small sections, still more democratic in their organization than those of Massachusetts. This was the mistake Jefferson committed; he disclosed too

* Tucker's Life of Jefferson, vol. ii. p. 419. Jefferson's Works, vol. vi. p. 696; vol. vii. p. 10.



openly to his Virginian friends the full extent of his purpose, and, in spite of all his pains to arouse their feelings of rivalry with the North, in spite of the ability with which he represented to them the life-giving influence of municipal liberty in New England, and the aggressive force which the constant intervention of the masses in public affairs gave this little fraction of the union, it was in vain that, after the fashion of Cato, ending every speech with the words, '*Carthago delenda est*,' he concluded every opinion with the injunction, 'divide the counties into wards.' *

He indemnified himself by founding the University of Virginia, a very difficult task, which was the amusement and honour of his old age. The higher branches of education were still more neglected, and still less popular in Virginia than primary education. William and Mary College, where Jefferson received his education, had fallen into decay, and there were good reasons for not restoring it. Situate in an unhealthy spot, closed in virtue of its old system against dissenters, almost deserted, and lingering on by means of its endowment only, it was the very opposite of that brilliant University, 'on a plan broad, and liberal, and modern,' † of which Jefferson had never ceased dreaming since the revolution. But the creation of such an intellectual centre could not be otherwise than very costly, and in spite of their desire to do what was agreeable to Jefferson, his friends were by no means disposed to bear the expense. A subscription that was opened in 1814, having amounted, after great exertions,

* Jefferson's Works, vol. vi. pp. 543, 544; Letter to J. C. Cabell, February 2, 1816.

† Ibid. vol. iv. p. 312; Letter to Dr. Priestly, January 18, 1800. See also pp. 316, 462; vol. vi. pp. 294, 372, 390, 537.

to no more than 44,000 dollars, it was necessary to have recourse to the legislature. Jefferson, in order to obtain a grant from it, employed an immense amount of finesse, activity, and perseverance; persecuting the members, either by writing or talking; now harping on the preservation of the republic and of democracy, now urging them to reflect how the interests of the South were imperilled by the habit of sending its children to be educated in the abolitionist universities of the North;* persuading the state to make over to him some worthless claims on the Federal government then using all his credit at Washington to get them paid, and finally availing himself at Richmond of his unhoped-for success as a reason for making further demands.

On August 1, 1818, a commission was appointed by the legislature to select a site for the new university, of which Jefferson was chairman. Madison and Munroe had consented to be members of it, but with the intention of taking no part in the proceedings, and for the sole purpose of doing homage to the able patriarch, and adding to his importance by this act of deference. Unanimously and without concert the members of the commission determined on leaving him master of all the arrangements he might deem necessary for carrying out his object. The site selected for the university was about four miles from Monticello. Jefferson could thus, whenever he pleased, have the satisfaction of riding over to the spot on which the building was to be erected, of indulging his passion for architecture, of personally superintending the workmen, spurring them on, and pointing the works out to strangers, whom his reputation attracted to that part of

* Randall's Life of Jefferson, vol. iii. p. 435.



the country. The hours he passed amid the foundations of his cherished university were the most agreeable of his life, in spite of the raillery and angry criticism to which he exposed himself, whether by the singularity of the architectural arrangements, or the excessive expenditure, or the anticipated selection of professors, all foreigners, so said the clergy, all men without religion, and all unworthy of the confidence of Christian parents. He heard himself called a visionary, spendthrift, atheist; he let them talk on, manœuvred with all the more care in the midst of the breakers, and prudently extracted from the public purse what he wanted in small doses.

On April 1, 1825, the university opened; every obstacle appeared overcome, everybody was satisfied; students and professors both looked forward with equal delight to the future; everything appeared to give augury that their collegiate course would be smooth, and their life an agreeable one. Jefferson was radiant with joy; at length the time had come when he might attempt to apply republican and democratic principles to the purposes of education; at length he would have the opportunity of showing that youth, like the people, is never better governed than when it is allowed to govern itself. But some sad vexations were lying in wait for him. *In spite of frequent appeals to the reason and patriotism of the students*, their conduct was not always unexceptionable; trial by jury, applied to college delinquencies, ended only in acquittals. Disorders of all kinds became the rule, and a revolt soon broke out of the most violent and vulgar character. Deeply mortified, Jefferson proceeded to the university with the official inspectors; Madison accompanied him. They each of them sharply rebuked the muti-

neers, and summoned the ringleaders to step out and submit. Two or three left the ranks, overwhelmed with confusion—amongst them Jefferson's own nephew! The firm old man could not restrain his indignation; words of the greatest vehemence fell from his lips; the culprit was instantly expelled. To see his work compromised, his doctrines overturned, his hopes destroyed by a member of his own family, was one of the most painful blows he could have possibly received at a time when, in fact, there was no lack of trials in store for him.*

The derangement of his affairs had, as far back as 1814, imposed upon him the hard necessity of entering into negotiations with Congress for the sale of his library, and of parting with it for almost nothing, after having to endure offensive discussions in the House of Representatives, as to the morality and value of the works collected at Monticello. In spite of this painful sacrifice his debts had gone on increasing. Bad crops, agricultural and commercial crises, combined with what he himself modestly called 'his own unskilful management.' † had already brought him to the verge of ruin, when the bankruptcy of one of his friends, for whom he had become bond for 20,000 dollars, gave him the 'finishing blow.' ‡ His son-in-law, Mr. Randolph, ruined like himself, but soured by misfortune, lived a solitary life, morose, fantastic, and useless to all who depended

* See the statement made by two professors of the University, Mr. Tucker and Mr. Dunglison. Tucker, vol. vii. pp. 535–537. Randall, vol. iii. pp. 517, 518.

† Randall, vol. iii. p. 531; Jefferson to M. T. J. Randolph, February 8, 1826.

‡ Jefferson's Works, vol. vii. p. 433; Letter to Madison, February 17, 1826.

upon him. At eighty-three years of age, Jefferson was obliged to declare that his family would after his death be without any means of support, and without any quarter they could look to for them.

'You kindly encourage me,' he wrote on February 11, 1826, to his favourite grandson, Mr. T. J. Randolph, 'to keep up my spirits; but, oppressed with disease, debility, age, and embarrassed affairs, this is difficult. For myself, I should not regard a prostration of fortune, but I am overwhelmed at the prospect of the situation in which I may leave the family. My dear and beloved daughter, the cherished companion of my early life, and nurse of my age, and her children, rendered as dear to me as if my own from having lived with me from their cradle, left in a comfortless situation, hold up to me nothing but future gloom; and I should not care were life to end with the line I am writing, were it not that, in the unhappy state of mind which your father's misfortunes have brought upon him, I may yet be of some avail to the family. . . . .'

Then, chasing away every feeling of bitterness, and deriving something almost amounting to hope from the recollection of his past good fortune, he says:—

'Perhaps, however, I may have no right to complain, as these misfortunes have been held back for my last days, when few remain to me. I duly acknowledge that I have gone through a long life with fewer circumstances of affliction than are the lot of most men,—uninterrupted health, a competence for every reasonable want—usefulness to my fellow-citizens—a good portion of their esteem—no complaint against the world which has sufficiently honoured me—and, above all, a family which has blessed me by their affections, and never by their conduct given me a moment's pain: and should this, my last request, be granted, I may yet close with a cloudless sun a long and serene day of life.'*

* Randall, vol. iii. p. 531.

What then was this last request, the success of which he was induced to consider as the condition essential to his peace of mind? A request to be permitted to sell his property by lottery. He who had so often made it a moral obligation 'never to engage in a lottery, or any other adventure of mere chance. . . however laudable or desirable its object,' * now stooped so far as to write for the edification of the legislature, and his own personal advantage, a little tract, called 'Reflections upon Lotteries,' † in which he attempted to prove that all was chance in this world, and that the passion for play, far from being immoral, is the moving principle of human activity; in which he heaped precedent upon precedent, in order to show that his request had nothing unusual in it; and enumerated the special grounds on which he had a right to a common indulgence; these were, the twelve different offices filled with honour for seventy years past in the service of the State; the Federal party crushed, the civil code of Virginia made democratic, its university founded. 'My request is,' added he, 'only to be permitted to sell my own property, freely, to pay my own debts. To *sell* it, I say, and not to sacrifice it; not to have it gobbled up by speculators, to make fortunes for themselves; leaving unpaid those who had trusted to my good faith, and myself without resource, in the last and the most helpless stage of life.' ‡

The legislature hesitated; Jefferson was wounded to his heart's core. 'I am taught to know my standard,' §

* Jefferson's Works, vol. v. p. 52; Letter to a committee instructed to arrange a lottery for the purpose of endowing East Tennessee College, May 6, 1810.

† Ibid. vol. ix. pp. 500–511; February 1826.

‡ Ibid. vol. ix. p. 510.

§ Randall, vol. iii. p. 532.

he wrote on February 15, 1826, to his friend Mr. Cabell. And two days later, after explaining to Madison that the depreciation which landed property was then suffering from in Virginia, would make an unreserved sale disastrous, while the lottery would at least permit his preserving his house at Monticello, he said —

> If refused, I must sell everything here, perhaps considerably in Bedford, move thither with my family, where I have not even a log hut to put my head into; and whether ground for burial shall be left me, will depend on the depredations which, under the form of sales, shall have been committed on my property. The question then with me was *utrum horum?* But why afflict you with these details? Indeed, I cannot tell, unless pains are lessened by communication with a friend. The friendship which has subsisted between us, now half a century, and the harmony of our political principles and pursuits, have been sources of constant happiness to me through that long period; and if I remove beyond the reach of attentions to the university, or beyond the bourne of life itself, as I soon must, it is a comfort to leave that institution under your care. . . . To myself you have been a pillar of support through life. Take care of me when dead, and be assured that I shall leave with you my last affections.*

After being exposed to a hot fire, the bill authorising the lottery passed. As soon as the position of Jefferson was known in the country, a general emotion of surprise and sympathy manifested itself in all quarters. The United States would not endure, it was said, the sale of Jefferson's property, under any form whatever; it was the duty of the public to pay his debts. A national subscription was at once set on foot; at New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, considerable sums

* Jefferson's Works, vol. vii. pp. 434, 435.



were collected. The idea of a lottery was inconsiderately given up; the public enthusiasm, so great and general for an instant, soon collapsed, and the subscription, from which so much had been expected, produced eventually not more than 18,000 dollars, hardly a quarter of what was necessary to relieve Jefferson from his embarrassments.* He was fortunate enough to die before he had an opportunity of accounting to himself, for this last and cruel deception. To a disease of the bladder, from which he had been suffering many years, were superadded, in the spring of 1826, the first symptoms of dysentery, which he at once looked upon as mortal. He made his will, but in no respect altered his manner of living, persisting, in spite of his family, in his solitary rides and his visits to the university.

On June 24, finding himself much enfeebled, he sent for his physician, Dr. Dunglison; and the latter at once perceived the case was hopeless. Jefferson consented to suffer his grandchildren to take their turns at his bed-side. Up to July 3, he continued in full possession of his faculties; speaking in a calm voice to those who were about him of the struggles in which he had taken part, of the calumnies by which he had been assailed, of the interest he took in the university, and of his friendship for Madison; narrating with elegance, almost with gaiety, certain episodes of the revolution; giving affectionate advice to all the members of his family, without overlooking the very youngest; but silent on the great question of the life to come. Already very near his end, and generally in a comatose state, he was once startled out of his sleep by some noise, and thought it was Mr. Hatch, the clergyman of his parish, asking permission to come in.

* Tucker, vol. ii. p. 550.



'I have no objection to see him,' said Jefferson, 'as a kind and good neighbour.'

It was now the day before the fourth of July, the fiftieth anniversary of that declaration of independence, to which his name remains gloriously attached. His family, no longer entertaining any hopes of preserving him, were anxious at all events that he should live long enough to see once more the light of this great day. He was himself apparently not without some anxiety of the kind. About five o'clock in the afternoon, fancying it was dawn, he enquired if it was the 4th. 'It soon will be,' was the reply. He again slept, but his sleep was disturbed by reminiscences of the great scenes of his youth. Suddenly rising up in a sitting posture, and making a gesture as if writing: 'Warn the committee,' he cried, 'to be on the alert.'

When midnight approached, all present were directing their looks with solemn anxiety towards the hands of the clock, as the breathing of the dying man became weaker and weaker; but his death-struggle was prolonged for a few hours more—exactly at mid-day he expired.* A few moments later, at the other extremity of the United States, at the very instant when all hearts in America were soaring upwards to God to give thanks for the day of independence, his comrade in the struggle with Great Britain, his competitor in the struggle for the presidency, John Adams, the *promoter* of the *declaration* of independence, was dying at the age of eighty-four years; he, too, thinking of the great work they had accomplished together; and murmuring in a tone that was now scarcely intelligible—'Thomas Jefferson survives.'†

* Randall, vol. iii. pp. 543–549. Tucker, vol. ii. pp. 552–555.

† John Adams's Works, vol. i. p. 636.

When the news of this remarkable and striking coincidence spread throughout the country, the emotion was profound; minute guns resounded, ships lowered their flags half-mast high in every harbour, the newspapers appeared edged in black, party violence, by mutual consent, was instantly hushed; the greatest orators of America blended into one funeral eulogy the glory of each of the two old rivals. But the best feelings of democracy are little lasting; it very soon forgets its most distinguished servants. Six months had scarcely passed away, when Jefferson's furniture was put up to auction, in order to pay his debts; when Monticello and Poplar Forest were advertised at street-corners; and when the daughter of him, whom America had named the 'Father of Democracy,' had no longer a place wherein to lay her head.

This study on Jefferson has been written without any indulgence for the vices of democracy. Certain persons will perhaps infer from this, that it has been suggested by a childish petulancy against that social condition to which the world is obviously tending. I do not wish there should be any mistake as to my intention. The social-democratic state * is a fact, to which new

* [By a social-democratic state, M. de Witt is good enough to inform me, he means a *democratic state* of society, that is to say, one in which all classes have a tendency to approximate and become confounded the one with the other. The social-democratic state is, therefore, a state of society characterised by an equality of social conditions. There is a natural connection between democratic institutions and the social-democratic state; nevertheless, the institutions may be more democratic than the social status, and vice versâ. Thus, suppose that in England the peerage and entails were suddenly to be suppressed, and all restrictions on the suffrage removed, English institutions would become democratic; but the social status



generations will have to accommodate themselves. Like whatever is human, it is a mixture of good and evil, and no one can pretend to render it perfect: but, while accepting its existence, and even its imperfections, let not those men who fix their eyes upon the future suffer themselves to yield with cowardly resignation to its evil tendencies, as to fatal forces it would be in vain to resist.

The fruits of democracy are not all bitter; it produces some, under our own eyes, that are very good; as, for instance, the diffusion of well-being and enlightenment among the humbler classes, the progressive developement of feelings of equity and humanity in the upper classes; in the lower spheres more intelligence, more activity, more productive force, more independence, more dignity; in the higher, a more unremitting concern for the fate of the masses; public wealth increasing simultaneously with an increased respect of man for man. These then are great and precious

would remain aristocratic, at least for a time; political privileges would have disappeared, but aristocratic distinctions would survive; the peers would be the equals only of their tenants, estimated politically, but not so in social estimation. The equality would be factitious. Suppose, on the other hand, that peerage, entails, and limited suffrage were suddenly to be imported into the United States, the institutions would become aristocratic, but the state of society and manners would remain democratic: there would be political privileges, but not, as in England, aristocratic social distinctions; in social estimation there would be neither superiors nor inferiors, nothing but equals. Here the inequality would be factitious. In France, manners and social conditions are much more democratic than in England, much less democratic than in the United States; and in France, in many respects, institutions are more democratic than the social status. This it is he has desired to indicate in what will be found farther on, towards the end of page 358 and at the beginning of page 359.]

blessings, at which all generous hearts must rejoice; these are the works of modern democracy, which it is their duty to support.

But while democracy is toiling usefully and justly to elevate the condition of the masses, it is at the same time filling them with unjust aspirations, equally destructive of order and liberty; it is exposing them to perilous temptations, from which their good sense and their moral feeling are incompetent to protect them, unless this sense and feeling be sustained, both by the firmness of men of character in the upper classes, and by the force of institutions.

When the greater number surrenders itself, and is surrendered by others, to its own bad instincts; when it is no longer subject to any other law but its own will, it becomes an improvident and capricious tyrant. Uncontrolled sovereignty is not adapted to human frailty; the best are prone to abuse it, and have no right to use it; the common herd cannot be more worthy of it; and, in fact, wherever it does rule, it aspires to govern by itself alone, and for itself alone; it fancies itself dispensed from the obligation of having law and reason on its side; it subordinates even its interests to its caprices; it acquires the habit of selecting for its leaders those only who will be obedient to its own good pleasure; and thus, at length, comes to choose inferior or unworthy governors; to banish from its councils every intellect and all form of action above the average height; to press them down with all the weight of its crushing bulk, at the risk of so completely exhausting them, that they will be sure to be found wanting whenever, in some spasm of good sense caused by a great public danger, the day arrives in which it feels the want of being headed by superior



men. A policy without sequence, and without care for the future, unstable laws, authority brought into contempt, a society at once agitated and uniform, minds still more levelled than ranks; such are the evil effects which the social-democratic state may bring with it, and which it must bring with it, wherever it finds no powerful corrective in manners and in laws.

After the revolution of 1848, France had a conviction, a very deep conviction, of all the perils and all the shame to which it was exposed by the outbreak of democratic passions and ideas. Neither good will nor courage, however, were wanting to her in the struggle she then maintained against the evil by which she was assailed; but institutions failed her when she required them, and she soon got tired of bravely contending without the protection of the slightest rampart, of having to defend herself, and by herself alone.

But would absolute power, whatever, indeed, be the veil in which it wraps itself, do more for the wants of France than did ill-organised liberty? Would it be the prop on which she might hope to lean for ever, without falling over on the side to which she inclines? Would it be in its power to give her that which she regards as the supreme good—security? I do not think so. Absolute power can never successfully grapple with the evil instincts of democratic societies. By its nature it partakes of them, and by its policy flatters them, in order to induce them to forget its yoke. Like democracy, absolute power takes for its device the demoralizing principle, *stat pro ratione voluntas*; like that, it degrades men's minds by forcing them to submit to the law of *sic volo, sic jubeo*; like democracy, it is the enemy of all independence of mind and position, of every kind of superiority which is not



its own work, of every public man who is not a paid official; like democracy, absolute power tends to bring a country to a dead level, to raze the natural bulwarks of order and liberty, to destroy in the midst of the nation that wholesome diversity of position, feeling, and opinion, which is one of the essentials of the healthy condition of a people; like that, too, it labours to give to all parts of the social body that fatal uniformity of temperament which exposes them to be attacked at the same moment by the same maladies, and which thus delivers over the whole country to every species of contagion, to that of lethargy as well as that of fever. Absolute power leads then to the same demoralization and the same disorganization as democracy left to itself, and does it more quickly too, because its action is more constant, more ably directed, and less patent; because its adversaries are more disconcerted, and more completely helpless. And at the same time that it renders the people unworthy of liberty, and incapable of defending themselves by themselves against disorder, absolute power cannot answer for the preservation of even material and present order, for it can give no assurance of its own duration. Its existence is essentially factitious and precarious. Condemned to undermine everything around it which shows a tendency to rise or to resist, everything which serves as the prop or the basis of a regular power, it exists only upon the condition of never depending upon anything but itself, and of being ever at the mercy of the tempest, like the house built upon sand, described in the Gospel.

Without an efficient distribution of authority among different powers, limiting, controlling, and supporting each other, there can be no stability for the state, no



security for the citizen, and no check upon the inconveniences of the social-democratic state. This principle, which should be always present to the minds of French conservatives, guided the wise assembly to which the United States are indebted for their constitution. It has been often said, and incessantly repeated, that the constitution of the United States rests wholly on the absolute principle of the sovereignty of the people; this is a grave mistake. The members of the convention of 1787 were anything but radicals; they met for the purpose of imposing a restraint upon American democracy; they looked with admiration and regret upon British institutions; they envied England her strong and liberal aristocracy, and if they made up their minds to dispense with a hereditary branch, if they recognised the impossibility in America of opposing the moderating power of a privileged class to the reckless violence of the crowd, they did not the less for all this persist in their attempts to subject popular power to effective control; they were not the less bent on finding some conservative combinations for the use of their country, which could supply the place of the old guarantees of English liberty. They no doubt accepted the social-democratic state as a fact, but in accepting it, they rejected the whole policy of the radical school. To be assured of this, we have only to compare their work with its maxims.

The doctrine of the radical school may be summed up thus. Every man has a will, the sole law of the individual. All men have an equal right to shape their own will, or at all events, to concur in the formation of the general will, the only law of society. To collect and count the wills of individuals, to cause the general will to prevail, such ought to be the end, the



exclusive end, of every political organisation. Hence there must be no power which does not emanate from the people, and which does not continue constantly under its control; no public office which is not elective, no election which does not take the whole population for its basis, and which is not conducted on the principle of universal suffrage; no representation not based on the principle of *mandates*, or strict instructions, nor revocable, or at all events temporary, and for short terms.

The constitution of the United States comes into collision with each of these rules respectively. The Senate is elected, not by the people, but by the state legislatures; and the various states are equally represented in it, whatever may be the difference of their population. The judges of the Supreme Court of the United States are not elective, nor removable at pleasure. The House of Representatives alone is directly chosen by the people; but by law each state is at liberty to define what it means by the people; and in fact, a limited suffrage continued to exist for several years throughout the greater part of the Union, after the constitution was adopted. Finally, there is nothing like mandates, and the senators are elected for the space of six years.

It was from its having been conceived in a spirit of independence as respects the principle of numerical sovereignty, that the constitution of the United States was able to supply Washington with the means of founding a great government; it is from its having ceased since 1801 to be worked in conformity with the spirit in which it was conceived, that this constitution has not fully attained the end that was aimed at by the men who framed it. Since the succession of



Jefferson to power, the bridle they desired to fasten on American democracy has been always so loosely held, and its action become so feeble, that the despotism of the multitude would be at this day insupportable in America, if it were not tempered by two accidental circumstances peculiar to the United States, the gigantic extent of their territory, and the ancient division of the country into distinct states.

'I believe ours,' says Jefferson, loftily, 'is to owe its permanence to its great extent, and the smaller portion, comparatively, which can ever be convulsed at one time by local passion.* . . . When frenzy and delusion, like an epidemic, gained certain parts, the residue remained sound and untouched, and held on till their brethren could recover from the temporary delusion.† . . . But the true barriers of our liberty in this country are State-governments; and the wisest conservative power ever contrived by man is that of which our revolution and present government found us possessed. . . . The republican government of France was lost without a struggle, because the party of *un et indivisible* had prevailed.' ‡

Could a democratic republic in France keep clear of this cause of destruction? could it bestow upon itself those special elements of stability which it meets with in the United States? Jefferson himself would have been very slow to admit it. If there be one utopia more incompatible with the genius of the French than that of a republic one and indivisible, it is certainly a federal republic. The unity of France is not the factitious

* Jefferson's Works, vol. v. p. 209; Letter to Governor Williams, November 1, 1807.

† Ibid. vol. iv. p. 396; Letter to Niles, March 22, 1821.

‡ Ibid. vol. v. p. 570; Letter to Destutt de Tracy, January 26, 1811.

product of revolution, any more than is the division of North America into distinct states; it is the work of ages; it is a condition of our security as well as of our greatness in the world; it satisfies at once our wants, our habits, and our tastes. It is imperative that liberty should know how to adjust itself to it. Even admitting that France could, as many respectable persons think she might, somewhat reascend the current upon which she has been floating for so many years, and which has landed her upon an excessive centralisation, yet I am not of opinion that she could ever reach the point at which she would be able confidently to rely on the force and independence of local self-government as a means of correcting the defects in her social state. Those guarantees against the abuses of democracy, which liberty in America derives from the wide distribution of the points of resistance, can only be found in France at the very centre of the country, in a governing power at once very strong, and very much distributed; in a powerful concentration of various powers drawing from various sources their authority as well as the grounds of their existence. I know that both radicals and absolutists concur in denying the existence of these divers sources in our country, as well as the possibility of giving a natural origin to institutions without making every branch of the government emanate from the people. I know also that several dispirited liberals secretly concede this point to their adversaries, and, so much so, that it is the fashion now-a-days to iterate despondingly that the French revolution has planed down the country to one uniform level, that it has banished all variety of position, and that there are no longer any ancient and honoured rights, no longer any classes, nor any strong individualism, nor any recognised superiority; in fact,



that nothing survives but citizens, all equal and all alike. This may really become true, should the liberal party acquire the habit of thinking it so; but, thank Heaven, it is in point of fact very much exaggerated. Possibly, indeed, there may no longer be the elements of a hereditary peerage among us, possibly the perpetuity of power, through personal transmission, must continue to be in France the exclusive privilege of the crown; but in default of hereditary elements, there are still in France personal elements; in default of classes wholly distinct, there are still among us men who have made their fortunes, and men who have yet to make them; enlightened and ignorant men, superior and inferior, men of high social position in small numbers, and of low social position in great numbers, besides many a weight and counterpoise, of which it is very possible to make good use. There are also in France numerous conservative elements, which might be very naturally grouped so as to enable them to play their part in the creation of a moderating power, invested with great and legitimate authority in the country. What we are deficient in, is not so much the means of setting liberty on a secure foundation, as it is the will to be free. Apathy of mind and will, this is now our real evil. The country appears to be no longer thinking of anything, caring for anything. We might suppose it lifeless. But let not those who look on the dark side of things be too hasty to despair. It 'is not dead, but sleepeth.' The liberal instincts of the nation have already passed through a similar phase of somnolence, and they have reawakened. This melancholy swoon of public spirit arises in France from the terror the revolutionary party strikes in well-intentioned but feeble minds; an exaggerated terror,

which reflection and the experience of other dangers will in time confine within proper bounds. In 1848 the friends of order, though disarmed, had only to unite to get the better of the revolutionary party. What their union could effect by its own proper strength, without protecting laws, without an established government, it could with far better chances of success effect when backed by defensive institutions. Let all those who are anxious for both monarchy and liberty be united, and the revolutionary party will be no longer to be feared, unless it be for its wheedling arts. Whenever the French people shall have recovered their liberties, they will be perpetually called upon to choose between two kinds of friends — friends truthful and firm, prompt to warn, as well as ready to restrain them in their excesses; and indulgent, fawning friends, eager to impel them in that downward direction to which they naturally incline, to choose, in a word, between — Washingtons and Jeffersons. On their choice will depend their fate.



APPENDIX.

I.

[*Extracts from a MS. in the British Museum, containing a Journal of an English Officer, who travelled over a part of the West Indies and North America in the course of* 1764 *and* 1765.

THE writer of this journal, which is brief, was evidently a man of observation and intelligence. The following notices, slight as they are, throw an interesting light on the state of feeling towards England, especially in the south, and show how true, at all events, it was at that time, what even Jefferson declared towards the close of his career would be always the case, that nothing but the bungling of rulers could make the English and Americans quarrel.

Speaking of Virginia, he says:—

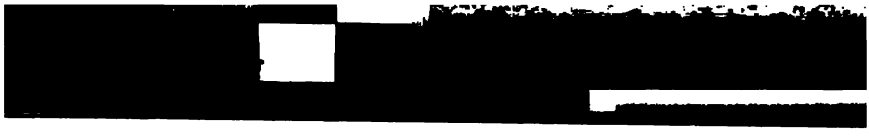
'This province was the first settled of any on the continent; it has always been a loyal one. The first settlers were many of them younger brothers of good families in England, who, for different motives, chose to quit home in search of better fortune. Their descendants, who possess the greatest land properties in the province, have intermixed, and have had always a much greater connexion with, and dependence on, the mother-country than any other province, the nature of their situation being such, from the commodiousness and number of navigable rivers and creeks, that they may export to, and import from home, everything they raise or want, from within a few miles of their own houses, and cheaper than any neighbouring province could supply them. They



have almost always lived in good harmony with their governors, and with one another; they each live at their own seats, and are seldom at Williamsburgh, but when the public business requires their attendance, or that their own private affairs call them there. Scarce any of the topping people have houses there of their own, but in the country they live on their estates handsomely and plentifully, raising all they require, and depending for nothing on the market.

'Money is at present a scarce commodity; all goes to England, and I am much at a loss to find out how they will find specie to pay the duties last imposed on them by the Parliament. I have had an opportunity to see a good deal of the country, and many of the first people in the province, and I must say they far exceed in good sense, affability and ease, any set of men I have yet fallen in with, either in the West Indies or on the continent; this in some degree may be owing to their being most of them educated at home, but cannot be altogether the cause, since there are amongst them many gentlemen, and almost all the ladies, who have never been out of their own province, and yet are as sensible, conversable and accomplished people as one would wish to meet with.

'Upon the whole, was I in the case to live in America, this province, in point of company and climate, would be my choice in preference to any I have yet seen; the country in general is more cleared of wood, the houses are larger, better, and more commodious than those to the southward, their breed of horses extremely good, and in particular those they run in their carriages, which are mostly from thoroughbred horses and country mares; they all drive six horses, and travel generally from eight to nine miles an hour, going frequently sixty miles to dinner: you may conclude from this their roads are extremely good. They live in such good agreement that the ferries, which would retard in another country, rather accelerate their meeting here, for they assist one another, and all strangers, with their equipages, in so easy and kind a manner, as must deeply touch a person of any feeling, and convince them that in this country hospitality is everywhere practised.



'Their provisions of every kind are good; their rivers supply them with a variety of fish, particularly crabs and oysters; their pastures afford them excellent beef and mutton, and their woods are stocked with venison, game, and hogs; poultry is as good as in South Carolina; and their Madeira wine excellent, almost in every house; punch, and small beer brewed from molasses, is also in use: but their cider far exceeds any cider I ever tasted at home. It is genuine and unadulterated, and will keep good to the age of twelve years and more.

'The women make excellent wives, and are in general great breeders. It is much the fashion to marry young; and what is remarkable, in a stay I have made of near a month in the province, I have not heard of one unhappy couple.

'The number of inhabitants in Virginia is supposed to be not fewer than 444,000, of near equal proportions of whites and blacks; the mulattos are much less frequently met with here than in the more southern latitudes, and their slaves in general are more handsome, and better clothed than any I have seen elsewhere; the generality of those born in the province are brought young to church and christened, and most parishes have one, two, or three very decent churches in them, built of brick and sashed, in which established clergymen of the Church of England officiate alternately.'

Under the head of Charleston, speaking of South Carolina, he says:—

'It is, of all the southern provinces, the most considerable on account of the number of inhabitants, the quantity and the variety of its productions and exports, and the good condition of its inhabitants. There seems to be in general but two classes of people—the planters, who are the proprietors; and the merchants, who purchase and ship the produce.

'Almost every family of note have a town residence, to which they repair on public occasions, and generally for the three sickly months in the fall, it being a certainty that the town of Charleston is at present the most healthy spot in the province. Fevers and other disorders are both less frequent in it, and less virulent in their symptoms; this is attributed



to the air being mended by the number of fires in town, as much as to its cool situation, on a point, at the junction of the two navigable streams called Ashley and Cowper rivers.

'The inhabitants are courteous, polite, and affable; the most hospitable and attentive to strangers of any I have yet seen in America; very clever in business; and almost all of them, first or last, have made a trip to the mother-country. It is the fashion, indeed, to send home all their children for education; and if it was not owing to the nature of their estates in this province, which they keep all in their own hands, and require the immediate overlooking of the proprietor, I am of opinion the most opulent planters would prefer a home life. It is in general believed that they are more attached to the mother-country than those provinces which lie more to the northward, and which, having hardly any staple commodities of their own growth, except lumber, stock, and horses, depend mostly on smuggling molasses and other contraband commodities.'

Here are one or two glimpses of Albany, founded and peopled by the Dutch settlers in the state of New York. He says, p. 80:—

'The town itself is dull and ill-built, having the gable-ends of the houses all to the streets, which are very dirty and crooked, and confined by the rising ground close behind the town. The land along the banks of the river is excellent, and well improved. The family of Rantzalaer (Rennsalaer) has possession of this tract for many miles.' He seems to have been struck with the superior character of the houses at that time in the colonies, noticing that 'one Mr. P. (afterwards General) Schuyler, has a good house near it (Albany), lately built in a better style than I have generally seen in America;' and again, in Saratoga, p. 126, he observes, 'that Philip Schuyler Esq., of Albany, has two good saw-mills, and a pretty little country house.' It is this latter property which Burgoyne, in 1777, was accused of having maliciously destroyed, to revenge himself on General Schuyler, who, by his operations as Commander-in-chief of the American force, had brought him to the verge of ruin. From this charge Burgoyne defended himself afterwards in the House of Commons, paying

at the same time an eloquent and graceful tribute to the kind and chivalrous conduct of Schuyler to him after his defeat at Saratoga, of which Gates obtained the credit, but the merit of which, as Mr. Massey* justly remarks, belongs to Schuyler.

What he says, p. 130, of the restless and levelling spirit of the New England people is curious, as showing how powerfully the old Puritan element was still at work, and as explaining that promptness and bitterness of opposition to England which was so conspicuous at the commencement of the troubles which finally led to separation. 'Boston,' he remarks, 'is more like an English old town than any in America. The language and manner of the people very much resemble the old country, and all the neighbouring lands and villages carry with them the same idea. The better kind of people in and near the town seem well-bred and sensible. They lament their present plan of government, which throws too much weight into the popular scale, and they know by experience the bad consequences attending that circumstance. When the stamp duty was first laid by Act of Parliament in 1765, the first and most flagrant acts of opposition to it, and of a riotous and licentious spirit in the mob, broke out here, and were fatal to the house and property of the Lieut.-Governor, Mr. Hutchingson. After all, it would appear as if nothing but a thorough alteration of their charter and form of government, giving to His Majesty the nomination of councillors as well as governor, and putting it altogether on the footing of a Royal government, would operate effectually; for without some such change, and an adoption of spirited measures, and an adequate degree of force to cooperate with, and to support civil government and laws, that ancient rugged spirit of levelling, early imported from home, and too successfully nursed and cherished, will in the four New England governments never be got the better of. Palliatives may be applied, and the danger postponed, but the malady is radical, and will be cured more easily now than in after times, particularly whilst we have peace in Europe.

* History of the Reign of George III., by W. Massey, M.P.



'The men resemble much the people of Old England, from whence most of them are sprung. I was rather surprised to find here, and not amongst the richest, the respectable names of Howard, Wentworth, Pelham, Pierpoint, Dudley, Carey, Russell, Temple, and many others of less note and ambiguity; but the levelling principle here everywhere operates strongly, and takes the lead; everybody has property and everybody knows it.

'The women here and at Rhode Island are accounted the most beautiful of any on the continent, and I am apt to believe it is so. At a ball of seventy ladies, I saw about one half handsome ones; perhaps one reason is, that every girl who has a pretty face and good clothes is free to come, and is well received at public places there, where there is no sort of distinction of persons.'

Speaking of Canada, he says, the 'women affect dress very much, and resemble in their manners, conversation, and behaviour, those of their mother-country (France). Such as style themselves *noblesse*, scarce hold any correspondence but with one another, despising all the others and calling them *des bourgeois*. They are in general rather pretty than handsome, very clever and entertaining, but not mindful of their family matters, to which they have not been accustomed; and therefore, as well as on account of their religion, to which they are exceedingly bigoted, they never can make good wives for English officers, although the experiment has been lately tried, and they seem to have no objection to such connections. The people in general, and even the most sensible of them, are prodigiously fond of their ancient manner of government, and have not yet found out the advantages attending a free inquest by juries. Time only can open their eyes in this matter, and many others, where the scale will always appear to a cool and sensible man to be of our side.'

I add one more extract for the purpose of calling attention to the writer's judicious remarks on the influence which a British officer may always command, who does his duty with the good breeding of a gentleman.

'Of the French inhabitants and officers, several of whom had gone home on the conquest of Canada by the English,



some are returned to it; others have sold their properties to British subjects, and all have taken the oaths of allegiance, and will, I think, in the succeeding generation become useful subjects both in peace and war, if properly moulded by those who, by their superior stations and good example, may take the lead in a point of so much essential consequence to Great Britain and America. In 1765, Major-General R. Burton commanded at Montreal as Brigadier-General: he was equally respected and loved by the troops and by the inhabitants, *as every honest man will in command, who does his duty in a gentlemanlike manner, and has determination and good breeding.*'

An admirable reflection! As the outfitters say, 'To gentlemen going out to India it is particularly recommended.']



II.

Abstract of a Correspondence between the Duke de Choiseul and the French diplomatic agents in England, relating to American affairs from 1766 to 1770.*

1766. THE uneasy relations between the American provinces and the mother-country had early attracted the notice of the French government. On October 19, 1766, the Count de Guerchy, the French Ambassador in London, writing to the Duke de Choiseul for a passport for a M. de Pontleroy, speaks of this person as 'of a Lieutenant in the Navy attached to Rochfort, whom you commissioned in 1764 to visit the British possessions in North America, which he did. . . . . It is necessary that the letters or passports should be made out in the name of Beaulieu, being that he assumed while
August 3. residing in that country.' On August 3, 1766, M. Durand, the intelligent representative of France in England, communicates to the Duke de Choiseul the substance of the information he had just received from this agent. He describes the prosperous condition of New York, Maryland, Pennsylvania; mentions the various products of these states, noticing especially the abundance of cedar-wood, which he represents as especially adapted to building purposes, inasmuch as it is easy to work, does not split, is lighter than oak, and not subject to rot. He describes the greater part of the inhabitants as accustomed to the sea, and as having extensive

* [In the original, the extracts from the diplomatic correspondence of, 1st, the Duke de Choiseul, 1766–1770; 2dly, the Count de Vergennes, 1775, 1776; and 3rdly, Citizen Genet, occupy 151 closely printed pages. It has been thought expedient to condense the matter into three abstracts, containing the chief points.]

fisheries. 'They build,' he says, 'about 150 ships, which they sell annually in Europe and in the West India Islands at about 7*l.* per ton.' He observes, they are beginning to feel their strength; thinks they are too opulent to remain long dependent; that the hope of getting into their own possession the fisheries and fur trade, of removing the impediments to their commerce, and of invading on their own account the West Indian sugar islands which are near them, will influence them sooner or later, and that England ought to anticipate the dangers to which she exposes herself by strengthening these three colonies. M. Durand goes on to state that M. de Pontleroy proposes to procure the command of some merchant vessel, and thus be enabled to take the soundings of every American port, as well as of every English port. He will select Canadians only for his crew, of whom he means to make good pilots, qualified to serve either in ships of war stationed on the coast or in privateers. As they become fit for service, he will, from time to time, send them to France. M. Durand concludes his letter with an interesting remark respecting the nature of the English Government. 1776.

'Will you allow me, my Lord, to avail myself of this occasion of laying before you some suggestions as to the kind of war we ought to wage against England. It appears to me that, in the circumstances in which we are now placed in respect to her, we have the means of exposing her to risks more likely to alarm her than any to which she has been exposed up to this time; that our wars with her will be less lasting, if the citizens of London, whom war enriches, and who are anxious for it, be made sensible of the horrors it occasions, and if their commerce were to be sufficiently harassed to bring them to feelings of more humanity. If war makes many sufferers in a monarchical state, it matters not; the sovereign does not permit himself to be determined by any expression of their feeling; but in a *republic*, where these very people have a share in the government, they very much determine the policy which will be followed, because they support their views with much more vigour than those who are influenced only by considerations of a general nature.'



1766. 'Should the violent conduct of England compel France to renew the war, it appears to me, according to this principle, her policy ought to be rather to direct her attacks against the fortunes of private individuals than to attempt any dismemberment of the enemy's territory; because public feeling, as regards these losses, will never act so powerfully on the deliberations of the country as the personal interest of those who would suffer from such a war.'

August 7. Four days after this curious application of the word republic to England, he again reports his conversation with M. de Pontleroy. According to this person, there were two parties in Philadelphia—the Quakers and Presbyterians,—the Quakers the richer, and monopolising all political influence, the Presbyterians the more numerous,—the latter composed of a chance-medley of Germans, quite weary of the English government, and who declare openly that Pennsylvania will one day be called Little Germany. 'In the last war,' he says, 'the latter refused, at first, to enter the English service. It was necessary to send for German officers, who in six weeks got together as many as seven thousand men;' and adds that, 'both in this province and in that of New York, all the recruiting officers were Germans. They speak little English, and avoid as much as possible all dealing with the English, who they look upon as people always ready to take advantage of them. They idolise the King of Prussia, and make much of all who served under him. Should France ever undertake an expedition against this country it would be advisable to employ German regiments, under the command of some person of distinguished name in the Austrian empire.'

Such was the *very exact* information which this M. de Pontleroy amused his employers with.

M. Durand, in subsequent letters, continues to report the information thus received, amongst which is the rather startling fact, that 'the Quakers of Philadelphia have an agent in London, named Franklin, a man of talent, who had persuaded them to ask for a royal government; that they have despatched him to England with powers to solicit this favour, in which he is opposed by the descendant of William Penn,

the lord of the whole province, and deriving from it a revenue of 50,000*l.* sterling!' 1766.

On August 24, 1766, he writes to the Duke that it is a great mistake to suppose that England can be weakened by the loss of any of her dependencies (meaning by dependencies those provinces which, not being represented in the English legislature, are treated as conquered countries), and that she cannot afford to lose them. No nation in Europe, he says, derives less advantage from her foreign dominions; vast sums spent upon them, great expenditure upon them — little economy, consequently little profit. The annual returns from America 12,000*l.*, the cost of administration 7,600*l.* *Ireland*, which he includes among the *dependencies*, does not pay the expense of the troops quartered upon her; Gibraltar and Port Mahon are of course costly to her: so that, in fact, all these branches might be docked off without endangering her vitality. He mentions one exception — Jamaica — as returning annually 600,000*l.*, 'and which nevertheless was one of the English possessions which has been least menaced with invasion.' August 24.

'The vanity of the English' may, he says, 'perhaps, have been wounded by the capture of Port Mahon, but wounds of this nature simply exasperate the enemy's animosity, without causing his destruction or materially affecting his strength. If they betrayed some anxiety at the time, it was from the apprehension that the French, animated by their success, might entertain the design of invading England. They have on this subject grounds of alarm better understood by them than us. They themselves represent England as often conquered by foreigners; allege that its constitution has become too regular for times of danger; that the number of springs she has to put in movement in order to bring her resources into play is a cause of weakness against sudden attacks: they dwell on the difficulty of assembling Parliament during the prorogation, and the impossibility of taking any important step without its sanction; on their general officers not being allowed to act on their own responsibility, and therefore afraid of doing anything on their own judgement; on the enormous disproportion between paper and

1766. specie, as likely, during a panic, to cause a run which the Bank of England would be unable to meet, as indicated by its embarrassments during Prince Edward's invasion, when George II. was upon the point of setting out for Hanover.

It is a mistake, he adds, to suppose that the external appearances of England are to be taken as any measure of her real strength; a false rumour, the mere threatening attitude of an enemy, would be sufficient to impair credit, and thus throw the whole machine into confusion—a fact well known, not to the world in general, but to those whose interest it is to look to the bottom of things. According to them, the English navy must be employed exclusively in defending her own shores, while those of France and Spain, on the contrary, able to act defensively on distant points, and harass the enemy's commerce in all directions, would inflict so much mischief on those classes in England which have so much influence, that the government would be finally compelled to send a part of her naval force to distant stations, and the country be thus left defenceless. These views, alluded to in the text, he says were mainly suggested by conversations with Lord Bolingbroke.

Dec. 15. On December 15 of the same year the Duke de Choiseul, writing to him, says that, according to his own means of information when at the head of the colonies, M. Pontleroy's communication appears to be trustworthy, and, if verified by further enquiry, will be laid before the King; he approves the idea of his being sent to America to obtain further information. He adds that, in spite of Lord Bolingbroke's authority, there would be many objections to make, and much

1767. information required, before it would be possible to act on the matter contained in his last letter; and again, on August

August 4. 4, 1767, that he had been for a long time aware of Lord Chatham's views respecting America. They were gigantic and alarming, simply as being likely to lead to eternal war; but, as respects his Asiatic policy, it had this advantage for England, that its benefit could be reaped without the risk of war: 'for what possible obstacle,' he asks, 'can be opposed to the intended empire that England proposes to establish in Asia?' His consolation, however, is that, before the policy of

England can be carried out, there will be a possibility of obstructing it; that there is difficulty enough in governing the state in which one lives, still more of overawing distant provinces like those of America—a difficulty which approaches to impossibility in the case of Asia. After urging M. Durand to keep his attention fixed on what is going on in England on this subject, to send him a detailed account, and add his own reflections to it, he proceeds: 'We are certainly not anxious, as you may well conceive, to see a strong administration in England. I trust that the anarchy will not be over quite so soon; I could wish it to last a century. I fear Mr. Grenville's return to office. He is, in my judgement, the only man who thoroughly understands the financial affairs of his country. It is true that, in virtue of this qualification, he is likely to be pacific; but he would put our enemy in a condition to go to war with us, and it would be much better she should be, at the end of three years, in the condition in which both countries are at present, than she would be at the expiration of ten years of Mr. Grenville's ministry.' 1767.

On the 24th of the same month the Duke de Choiseul, in replying to a long letter of M. Durand's, in which the latter gives a summary of Franklin's exposition (in 1766) of colonial grievances, observes: 'I am much astonished that England, which is such a mere dot in Europe, should rule over more than a third of America; that the object of her American dominions should be only commerce; or that this same object should apply to India, so decidedly as my Lord Clive informs us it does, that the north of Europe should be one of the principal points to which English commercial cupidity directs itself, and that English commerce should be trying to intrude into all parts of Africa, and of the south of Europe, in such a way that, if every man now living in England were engaged in commerce, I do not believe that even then England could suffice to what she undertakes. I shall be told that it is so: very good; but as it cannot be, I have always the hope that what I do not conceive possible will not be injurious.' August 24.

After consoling himself with this little speculation on the impossible, he proceeds to show that the American colonies can

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Sept. 3. In another letter he says, it would
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fourthly, a union with the crown of England, like that of Scotland. A union like this, he thinks, would confer upon them important benefits. England would have many objections to it, but would accept it as the best alternative. Should, on the contrary, a separation occur, it would be at all events dangerous to the possessions of other European powers in America; and he reminds the Duke that in the course of the last war the English colonies offered to achieve the conquest of St. Domingo at their own expense, and also that they had furnished 25,000 men for the war in Canada. 1767.

Writing again on November 23 he has the following allusion to Lord Chatham:— Nov. 23.

'Lord Chatham has sent his proxy to the Duke of Grafton for the rest of the session, beseeching him, above all things, not to tell him a word of what is passing. His madness, to speak out plainly, consists in his being seized with a general tremor at the slightest sudden noise, or the least suspicion of an intention to talk to him on business; otherwise eating and drinking as usual, often walking or riding, but weary of everything about him, and spending enormous sums, especially on his children.'

And again the next day he writes to the Duke:—

'Lord Chatham is a mere phantom, which some interested persons are desirous to have appear, but which is certainly not in a state to show itself. He said to the Chancellor, Lord Camden, with a theatrical gesture, stretching forth his arm, "You see, my Lord, it is very strong; but one word on business, and my whole body is agitated and convulsively affected." His bedroom door is constantly watched to prevent anyone taking him by surprise. He lets fall whatever he has in his hand if he even hears the lock of the door turn without his expecting it. I believe him to be at the end of his career; for the public, no longer seeing him in his place during the session of Parliament, will be tired of talking and hearing of an invisible and helpless being, and the King will not be long able to put off filling up his place. His partisans would much prefer making him pass for an actor than a madman; but the public will eventually judge him to by what he is, and this once for all. He can no longer be to Europe anything



1767. more than an object of compassion. I do not conceive that he will ever again be able to disturb its repose.

'His violence, however, would be much less to be feared than the cupidity of the nation, than its incessant enterprises, and that tone of superiority which too often accompanies success. For even were Lord Chatham to resume the direction of affairs, peace, would still be for a long time unbroken, provided France and Spain could put up with the intoxication of England, since the latter was more indisposed for war than ever, though her desire of encroaching everywhere remained unabated.'

Dec. 1. In a letter of December 1, 1767, M. Durand, writing to the Duke of Choiseul, says: 'The secret committee in the colonies, feeling the want of foreign aid, had sent an emissary to London during the heat of the contest about the Stamp Act, who, under certain contingencies, was to proceed to France. This fact, he observes, he got from a person residing in London, to whom he replied with a smile that France was not at all disposed to raise up a power that would be formidable to her own colonies, and, however large and tempting her offers might be, we should prefer peace with England to projects of very doubtful issue, and which might turn to her own disadvantage.' To this the Duke replies in a few days

1768. afterwards that his answer was a very sensible one. Three

March 12. months after this, on March 12, we have the Count du Châtelet, who would appear to have succeeded M. Durand, on the same subject of American affairs; in respect of which he canvasses various modes of advantageously considering the colonial quarrel, and turning it to the profit of France. 'Were a man,' he says, 'of Cromwell's genius to rise up in New York, he would have a less hard task before him than the one which that "usurper" successfully accomplished;' possibly such a man existed, and only wanted a favourable combination of circumstances to put him in the right place. 'It was, therefore,' he urged, 'the business of France and Spain to bring about such circumstances. All that would be required to secure the independence of the colonies was arms, a leader, and a feeling of self-reliance in the minds of the inhabitants.' Such being the case, he asked the Duke if

he did not think it would be expedient to send trusty emissaries into the country, who might first secretly put themselves into communication with the principal leaders for the purpose of obtaining exact information, and be on the spot to take advantage of any serious scheme on the part of the colonists to obtain aid from France and Spain. The Duke replies on the 21st instant that he had laid the contents of the Count's letter before the King, and that His Majesty was anxious that he should continue to communicate all the information he got on this subject. 1768. March 21.

On May 23, after an interchange of letters with the Count du Châtelet respecting the best means of overthrowing the English influence in India, the Duke de Choiseul writes a letter to him respecting some recent occurrences in London, an extract from which is found in the text at page 45. There is also a reference in the same place to a despatch from the Count du Châtelet respecting the policy of admitting the produce of the American colonies free of duty into French and Spanish ports. May 23.

On August 19 M. Francès writes to the Duke of Choiseul that Lord Hillsborough had represented to him the disturbances in Boston as not likely to be a cause of anxiety, provided, as was most possible, the other colonies did not follow the example; that he had positively assured M. Francès that no more troops, either military or naval, would be sent to America, the number actually there being sufficient for all purposes. He further observed, said M. Francès, that Canada and its dependencies were the only parts that were perfectly quiet, 'as we ought to be well aware from the agents and emissaries in our pay there.' August 19.

'I assured him,' continues M. Francès, 'that not only had we no such thing there, but that we had not the slightest interest in having any such; and I entreated him to attach no importance to fables likely to be invented by people trying to make themselves important and necessary, without having carefully examined them, and he promised me, whenever such an occasion should present itself, to form no judgement without first asking for information.'

Two days after this charming little specimen of diplomatic



1768. August 21. duplicity, the Duke, alluding to a translation of a pamphlet attributed to Dr. Franklin, which M. Francès had sent him a few days before, observes that it is very lucky that the advice of the author is not listened to in England; that the more he reflects on the subject, the more he is convinced that the whole difficulty might be got rid of by permitting the colonies to be directly represented in Parliament; and the expedient being so obvious, he presumes there is some objection to it which he is not aware of, that prevents it from being put into execution.

Oct. 28. M. Francès, as appears by a despatch of October 28, was afraid that the Boston convention would precipitate things too much, and bring them to a premature issue.

Nov. 11. And the Count du Châtelet, on November 11, writes to the Duke de Choiseul, that if things could only go on as they were doing, it was all that France could desire, for the quarrel then could have no end, the colonies would learn to do without the aid of the mother-country, England would be ruined, and her vast possessions in America would be nothing better than a millstone round her neck. But this, he thinks, will certainly not happen, for the distress felt by different classes will oblige Parliament to do something to remedy the mischief. That it was quite possible, therefore, either that some sort of accommodation would be patched up, or that the forces collected against the colonies would be turned against France or Spain, thus diverting the minds of the colonists by means of a war from their own affairs. He says, however, that he believes the English administration is at present earnestly desirous of peace with other nations, and that their determination is to constrain their colonies by force; but he hopes they will be disappointed in the latter

Nov. 18. purpose. Again, on the 18th, he repeats his conviction that if the quarrel continues there will be thousands of opportunities of which France can avail herself to put England in a position from which she could never recover. He urges, therefore, the necessity of keeping a watchful eye on its progress, and especially of being ready, in case, by any sudden accommodation of the differences, the French colonies should be put in jeopardy, either to seize the proper moment of attack,



if we are able to do so, or to prepare in time for our defence if it be requisite. Measures for this purpose, he recommends, should be secretly concerted with Spain, which would meet any contingency. On September 9, he submits to M. de Choiseul whether, in case of a rupture with England and her colonies, even though a premature one, England and Spain ought to remain passive spectators of an opportunity which may never recur. A few days after the Duke thanks him for his suggestions respecting the policy that ought to be pursued by France and Spain, and says the King is highly pleased with his views, and thanks him for the zeal he shows for his interest. And again on January 28, 1769, the Count du Châtelet writes to the Duke an able letter, pointing out the advantages of the free admission of the produce of the American colonies into France and Spain free of duty. The Duke replies on February 6, that the King and his ministers are very much struck with his proposal, but that, it being necessary to consult Spain on the subject, he had, in conformity with the King's orders, sent an extract from his despatch to the Marquis d'Ossuno, with a request that he would communicate it to the Spanish ministry. The proposition, it seems, found no favour in Spain; for on February 20 the Marquis d'Ossuno, on behalf of the Spanish government, informs the Duke that it cannot be entertained, giving, amongst other reasons, these — that in case of the colonies becoming independent, they would form themselves into a republic, a form of government dangerous on account of the able, well-devised, and determined measures with which it would carry out plans of conquest natural to ascribe to it; or, in case of no separation taking place, it would then turn out to be a mistake to have allowed the free admission which was the subject of the despatch. But, meanwhile, the suggestion had been so very agreeable to the Duke de Choiseul, that, writing on February 24, he said, it had again been the subject of deep consideration and long discussion in the cabinet in His Majesty's presence, who seemed to him to approve of his plans. He added, he had sent instructions to various official persons to obtain information on the subject. And on March 14 he communicates to the Count the reply

1768.

Sept. 9.

Dec. 21.

1769.

Jan. 28.

Feb. 6.

Feb. 20.

Feb. 24.

March 14.

1769. from the Spanish government, observing, 'I must confess it seems to me to be reasonable enough. We shall see if, upon further reflection, the court of Madrid will not be inclined to enter into our views.'

March. In March 1769 the French minister received a letter from Colonel du Kalb, dated January 15, 1768, in which he announces that, having left London in October last, in a vessel bound for Philadelphia, instead of taking the packet-boat of the 10th from Falmouth, he had just arrived, after a terrible passage, in which they had sadly suffered from winds and want. Their provisions, he said, were, generally speaking, spoilt; they were but too happy to have a ration of four pounds of mouldy biscuits a week and a bottle of foul water a day. But as bad as all this was, he congratulates himself on not coming by the packet, which, from the unexampled length of time which it had been due, was supposed to be lost. He describes in two or three letters the great excitement prevailing in America, the probability, or rather the certainty, of their independence, and notes the excellence of their militia, which, he says, the royal officers acknowledge to be not inferior to the regulars.

III.

Abstract of a Correspondence between the Count Vergennes and the French diplomatic agent in London, relating to American affairs (1775–1776).

THE Duke de Choiseul having retired from office, the subject seems to have dropped until 1775, when we find the Count de Vergennes, now Prime Minister, writing on July 22 to the Count de Guines, asking for information on American affairs. On the 28th of the same month the Count de Guines writes in reply, that Lord Rochford the day before had told him that numbers of persons of either party were beginning to think the best way to finish the war with America would be to declare war with France. Lord Rochford himself was of opinion, he added, that such a war, by rendering the Americans anxious about Canada, and forcing them in such a case to choose between the French and English, would certainly lead them to give the preference to the latter; and he pointed out the necessity of France keeping on her guard, while at the same time avoiding any show of preparation which would excite the suspicions of England. This, he says, was very difficult to do, and all he could suggest for the present, was to get the best information possible. Chance, he adds, had thrown in his way an opportunity of doing so. M. de Bonvouloir, a French gentleman, first cousin of the Marquis de Lambert, had been a volunteer in the regiment of the Cape, and had been obliged to quit St. Domingo for change of air; he had been in all the English colonies, from which he had just returned. He had been offered a commission in the rebel army, and had many acquaintances, from whom he could get information, in many parts of the country. His information respecting what he

1775.

July 22.

July 28.

75. had seen appeared very full, and he asked for nothing better than to return there. He appeared to be full of zeal. Some accident, it seems, which had made him almost a cripple, had hitherto prevented him from finding employment in England; he is ready to go wherever he is sent. The Count de Guines, therefore, undertook, if the King allowed it, to make arrangements with this person, such as would prevent anyone from running the risk of being compromised but himself: he stipulated for three things — first, a lieutenant's commission in the infantry, dated from the previous September, which would give him the opportunity of taking service in the rebel army with advantage, should he think it useful to his purpose, or at all events procure him a certain consideration among the Americans. The reason of the commission being antedated, was that he had already given himself out in the country for an officer. Secondly, he would require one hundred guineas for his travelling and other necessary expenses. Thirdly, a letter, not to be given, but only to be shown, to him, and in which M. de Vergennes was to state that the King thanked the proposed lieutenant for his zeal, and recognised his services, which, according to M. de Guines, were all the more praiseworthy, inasmuch as, so said his veracious informant, it was the practice in the rebel camp to shoot, without any kind of trial, every man who was merely suspected of being unfaithful to their cause,— a fact of which there could be no doubt, since, in the early part of the last month, two superior officers were actually executed in this way in M. de
ust 7. Bonvouloir's presence. Ten days after this, the Count de Vergennes sends the required letter to the Sieur de Bonvouloir, describing himself as attached to the regiment of
ust 7. the Cape; and in a despatch of the same date (August 7), at the same time warns his ambassador that no evidence can be found in the French Admiralty that any such person was ever in any way connected with the regiment of the Cape. Nevertheless, the request made by M. de Guines was to be fully conceded. In the same despatch he begs M. de Guines to have an explanation with Lord Rochford—not an official one—and to endeavour to extract from him how far he had himself been influenced by the views to which he alluded.

On the 18th, the Count de Guines, referring to a declaration recently made in the name of all the colonies at Philadelphia, remarks, with much regret, on the confident manner in which it speaks of foreign succour. Lord Suffolk, he says, had alluded to it the day before: not having read the declaration, he (De Guines) could only answer generally that he was unable to conceive what particular power was referred to; but that he knew two, which, by their position, and as having colonies of themselves, were interested in seeing those of England return to their obedience; he then went on, he says, to state a fact which appeared decisive to him, and that was, that all Europe had a common interest in preventing a new government rising up of a nature to foster the ideas of liberty, which some hot-headed people throughout it were full of. He succeeded, he adds, in convincing Lord Suffolk that France's self-interest, the most powerful argument that can be used in political matters, was diametrically opposed to anything of the kind. And again on September 1, he says, he had once more assured Lord Suffolk that the King's inclination, *as well as a sense of justice, would prevent his Majesty from ever favouring the troubles in America*, giving as his reason for returning to the subject, that he had been positively informed that papers had been found on board an American ship recently captured by an English frigate, among which was an address to a European power soliciting its protection, that this fact was derived from a source to be depended upon, and that there was even a question of laying these papers before Parliament at the opening of the approaching session; but the name of the power was still a mystery.

1775. August 18.

Sept. 1.

On the 8th of the same month he alludes in his despatch to two unpublished letters that had passed between General Burgoyne, the Commander-in-Chief of the English army, and General Lee, of the American army, in which these two gentlemen, formerly very intimate, urged each other to change sides. Lord Rochford, who had read them, declared that General Lee in his letter states, on his word of honour, that the Americans knew to a certainty that they would receive the support of France and Spain. The English

Sept. 8.



1775. minister, it appears, spoke on the subject in a very friendly tone, and M. de Guines gave him the most positive assurances that the assertion was utterly false;* and in a despatch of the very same day, M. de Guines writes to the Count de Vergennes that M. de Bonvouloir had set out on his mission, that he had tutored him in such a way as to prevent his compromising anybody but himself, and that in consequence of the letter of General Lee, he had even strictly enjoined him never to pronounce the word French, nor enter into any discussion respecting the feeling of the French government towards the Americans; his duty therefore would be simply to send back such information as might be deemed important to French interests.

While Louis XVI.'s ambassador was thus informing his government that the emissary just raised by it to the rank of lieutenant, for the purpose of being able, if necessary to the promotion of his views, to enter the rebel army as an officer,

Dec. 10. had set out, his minister, on December 10, was communicating to the ambassador his approval of the reply he had made to Lord Suffolk, and desiring him to take every convenient opportunity of expressing himself in the same way. 'We are not aware,' he adds, 'on what the Americans can ground their hopes, or to what particular power they look to; as yet, they have made no advances to us, but, should they do so, we shall politely refuse them, and keep their secret.' And again,

Dec. 18. writing on December 18, he informs M. de Guines that the King approves of his frank answer to the English minister, but thinks he ought to stop there, *and put nothing more in writing*. Lord Rochford's object, they thought, evidently was to extort some declaration which he could make use of in Parliament, and perhaps also in America, to discourage the Americans, by making them suppose they had no assistance to expect from either of the two crowns. 'The King,' adds M. de Vergennes, 'desires neither to increase the difficulties

* [To this letter was annexed a note from Lord Rochford, enclosing two printed copies of the letters alluded to, in confirmation of what he had stated that morning to M. de Guines, adding that he would not be sorry to be able to give it an authentic contradiction.]



of the British government, nor to encourage the resistance of the Americans; but then, on the other hand, it does not suit him to be used as an instrument for subjecting them.' 1775.

On December 28 comes a letter from M. Bonvouloir, written from Philadelphia. We find him already holding confidential conversations with Franklin, and three other influential members of the secret committee. He had been introduced to them as a private individual, by means of a respectable Frenchman on whom he could *depend*,* and who was much in the confidence of the delegates, of the name of Daymons, the city librarian. Dec. 28.

Being thus in connection with the leaders of the revolution, M. de Bonvouloir says that he made them no offer whatever, promising them *only* to render them every service which could *depend on him*, without making himself in *any way responsible for events*, and all by means of his *acquaintances*, and without putting himself at all in their power. Being asked on what terms France would aid them, he replied that, in his idea, France *wished them well*. But would she aid them? *Possibly she might*. On what footing? *He could not at all tell;* but, if it should happen, it would always be upon just and equitable conditions; that, moreover, *should they think fitting to do so*, they had only to make their proposals; that he had valuable acquaintances, and would undertake to have their demands *presented*, but *nothing further*. Discouraging the idea of their sending one of their delegates as their representative to France, he informed them he thought it might be attended with some risk, but that, if they would intrust him with anything,

* [I note this word in italics, there being no reason why he should be anxious about the fidelity of this person, if he simply presented himself to *him* as a private individual. The only explanation seems to be that he had with him the Duke de Choiseul's short note, affirming the King's recognition of him as an agent, which M. de Châtelet had asked for as a document to be *shown* but not *given* to him; a suspiciously idle ceremony; it is manifest that it had been given to Bonvouloir as a voucher. The rest of the words in italics are so marked in the French text, and were, I presume, copied from the original despatch. Their meaning is obvious enough.]



1775. *possibly* he might get replies which would decide them as to the course they should pursue; but that, in fact, he could not undertake to advise them in any way; he was merely a private individual travelling for curiosity; that he should be really glad if, by means of his *acquaintances*, he could be in any way useful to them; that he would not expose them, himself, *or anyone, to any risk;* that affairs of this importance were too delicate to be lightly treated, especially as he had no right, no power; and that he could only guarantee one thing, and that was, he would never betray their confidence. He says the members of the committee were only five in number; that they met at an appointed spot after dark, each of them going to it by a different road; that they had given him their confidence, after his first telling them that he could *promise, offer,* and *answer for,* nothing, and after having warned them several times that he could merely act as a well-disposed individual. He encloses a letter from the secret committee, requesting to know from him, as a private individual, first, whether he could give them any information of the feeling of the French Court towards the colonies, and, if favourable, how they could receive a positive assurance of it; secondly, whether it would be possible to get from France two skillful engineer officers, who were to be depended on, and what steps should be taken to procure them; thirdly, would it be possible to obtain directly from France arms, and other warlike stores, in exchange for the products of the country? To these three questions M. de Bonvouloir replied, first, that he thought he might venture to say that France was well disposed towards them, and, as far as *he knew*, had no other than good feelings towards them; but as to obtaining positive assurance of it, there was only one way, that of asking directly for it—a ticklish step, requiring careful management; he would neither advise for nor against it, nor take it upon himself; it was much too delicate a matter. Secondly, two engineer officers, or more, could be obtained; the only thing required would be to ask for them; that he had already done so on their behalf, without being positively sure of success, though expecting it, as he had serviceable correspondents. Thirdly, as to procuring arms

and military stores in exchange for produce, that was a mere mercantile operation, and he saw no great objections to it on the part of France; he would even refer them to good correspondents, without himself becoming responsible for anything; of course, they must undertake it at their own risk and peril; at all events, they would do well not to make too much use of the same port, which might attract attention; he did not know whether they would have free entrance and exit from the French ports; this would be an open declaration in their favour, and possibly involve war; perhaps France would shut her eyes, and that was all they wanted; still he could not answer for anything; he was nobody; he had serviceable *acquaintances*—that was all. 1775.

In March 1776, M. de Rayneval, chief clerk in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, drew up a paper entitled 'Reflections on the actual position of the English colonies, and the course which France ought to take with respect to them.' After describing England as the natural enemy of France, and as a greedy, ambitious, unjust, and faithless enemy, the invariable and cherished object of whose policy was, if not the destruction, at all events the impoverishment, humiliation, and ruin of France, he urged, as a natural consequence, that it was the business of France to take every possible opportunity of weakening the strength and power of England. Taking these two truths as his point of departure, the question was, how the troubles in America could be made conducive to this desirable end? He was of opinion that to favour the colonies would be, first, to diminish the power of England, and to raise that of France; in the second place, to cause a great diminution in English commerce, and a great increase in French commerce; thirdly, to bring about eventually the recovery of the possessions which England had wrested from France, such as the coast fishery, that of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, not to speak of Canada. But it might be objected that, once a free and independent state, the Americans would become dangerous to the French colonies, and the rich possessions of Spain in South America. To this there were two answers: in the first place, they would be too much exhausted for a considerable time to think of attacking their 1776. March.



1776. neighbours; in the next place, they would be most likely to form themselves into a republic, which, as is well known, says the chief clerk, is not given to conquest, and that they would be too busily engaged in reaping the fruits of peace to be troublesome to their neighbours. Supposing the colonies did encroach on the possessions of Spain, it did not necessarily follow that this must be injurious to France—the obligations imposed by the family compact not to be infringed, of course. The question then arose, how France could assist them, at what epoch she ought to assist them, and what would be the consequences of her assisting them? As regarded the first point, the mode suggested was the exchange of arms and stores against their produce, which, by means of confidential agents, could be conducted without the government appearing in it, or attracting the displeasure of the Court of St. James's, and exclusively at the risk and cost of the Americans themselves. As to assistance in money, that, he thought, there were means of effecting indirectly—or directly, if necessary. As respected naval assistance, this would be a matter of more difficulty. It could not be done openly without danger of a war with Great Britain; and not clandestinely, as that, if found out, would justly expose the French to the charge by England of secretly fomenting the rebellion in her colonies. But there would be a way of getting rid of the difficulty, and that was by sending ships of war, disguised as merchant vessels, to St. Domingo, or some other convenient place, where the Americans could go and get them at their own risk, after exchanging papers with the French officer in command, to give the affair the character of a purchase. In this manner the *insurgents* might strengthen their navy by the aid of France, without herself appearing in it at all. As to the time at which the assistance should be given, he said that at the present moment they had all they wanted, but this might not, it was to be feared, continue so long, and France should therefore at once attend to this point; she should inspire them with courage and perseverance, by promising to aid them as soon as circumstances would allow, and should give them to understand that the precise time would depend upon their successes, but that they might expect that at the end of

the next campaign such an opportunity would occur. France in this way would avoid committing herself, whether in respect to the insurgents or to the Court of St. James's, and would be in a position to strike a decisive blow whenever she thought circumstances ripe for it.* As to the consequences of assisting the colonies, he thought the results in any case would be the same. If England were not successful at the outset, this would be a proof of weakness; France might therefore, without risk, assist the colonies. Should England be successful in her attempts to keep the provinces in subjection, she would probably attack our colonies out of revenge for the secret aid to the Americans which she would certainly give France credit for. In the event of her being defeated, she would endeavour to seize upon the French West India islands, by way of indemnity for her losses. Consequently, war under any contingency would be inevitable, therefore it was the interest of France to prepare immediately for war; and the best way of doing that would be to obtain the sympathy of the colonies, and, if necessary, to make common cause with them. 1776.

This document is followed by another called 'Considerations,' a paper drawn up by M. de Vergennes to be laid before the King. After some general reflections on the advantages which the two crowns of France and Spain derive from the continuance of the civil war in America, and, on the other hand, on the inconvenience which might arise from the independence of the colonies, and the probability that, in case of failure in North America, England would, to recover its credit, turn its arms against the French and Spanish possessions in America, he proceeds to consider the course at once to be pursued. After bitter attacks upon the English for their habitual breach of good faith, violation of treaties, and disregard of that observance of the sacred laws of morality which distinguishes the French,† he infers that they will

* [Surely Albion has not a right to monopolise the title of 'perfidious.']

† [This compliment to French morality, as a prelude to what follows, is highly characteristic and amusing. It seems incredible



1776. take the first opportunity to declare war against France or invade Mexico. No doubt, if the Kings of France and Spain had martial tendencies—if they obeyed the dictates of their own interest, and, perhaps, the justice of their cause, which was that of humanity, so often outraged by England—if their military resources were in a sufficiently good condition—they would doubtless feel that Providence had evidently chosen that very hour for humiliating England, and revenging on her the wrongs she had inflicted on those who had the misfortune to be her neighbours and rivals, by rendering the resistance of the Americans as desperate as possible. The exhaustion produced by this internecine war would prostrate both England and her colonies, and would afford an opportunity to reduce England to the condition of a second-rate power—to ravish from her the empire she aimed at establishing in the four quarters of the world with so much pride and injustice, and relieve the universe of a tyranny which desires to swallow up both all the power and all the wealth of the world. But, the two crowns not being able to act in this way, they must have recourse to a circumspect policy. This granted, M. de Vergennes lays down four propositions: First, care must be taken not to commit themselves, and so bring on the evils they desire to prevent. Secondly, it must not be supposed that inaction, however complete, could save France from being an object of suspicion; that the actual policy of France did not escape suspicion even then; that the English, accustomed to think of their own interests, and to judge others by themselves, would necessarily think it unlikely that the French government would let slip so good an opportunity of injuring them; and even if they did not think so, they would feign it if they wanted to attack France, and Europe would believe it in spite of her denial. Thirdly, that the continuation of the war would, for obvious reasons, be advantageous to the two crowns. Fourthly, that the best mode of securing this result would be, on the one hand, to

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that an intelligent statesman should condescend to such platitudes in a paper, not for the public, but the King.]

keep up the persuasion in the minds of the English ministry that the intentions of France and Spain were pacific, so that they might not hesitate undertaking an active and costly campaign; and, on the other hand, to sustain the courage of the Americans by countenancing them secretly, and by giving them vague hopes which would obstruct any attempts England might make to bring about an amicable accommodation, and would contribute fully to develope that desire for independence which was now beginning to be observed amongst them. The colonists would be rendered furious by the injuries inflicted upon them; the contest would grow fiercer; and, even should the mother-country prove successful, she would for a long while have need of all her disposable force to keep down the spirit of independence, and would not dare to risk the attempts of her colonies to combine with a foreign enemy for the recovery of their liberty. Thence he deduces the following inferences:— 1776.

First, that they should continue dexterously to keep the English ministry in a state of false security with respect to the intentions of France and Spain.

Secondly, that it would be politic to give the *insurgents* secret assistance in military stores and money; that the admitted utility would justify this little sacrifice, and no loss of dignity or breach of equity would be involved in it.

Thirdly, that it would not be consistent with the King's dignity or interest to make an open contract with the *insurgents* until their independence was achieved.

Fourthly, that in case France and Spain should furnish assistance, they should look for no other return than the success of the political object they had at that moment in view, leaving themselves at liberty to be guided by circumstances as to any future arrangements.

Fifthly, that perhaps a too marked inactivity at the present crisis might be attributed by the English to fear, and might expose France to insults to which it might not be disposed to submit. The English, he adds, respect only those who can make themselves feared.

Sixthly, that the result to which all these considerations



1776. led was, that the two crowns should actively prepare means to resist or punish England, more especially as, of all possible issues, the maintenance of peace with that power was the least probable.*

* [The high tone of political morality with which this paper opens, is in ludicrous contrast with the sharp practice it recommends at the close. It is like the inversion of a celebrated order, and amounts to desiring the apprentice to come to prayers *first*, and sand the sugar *after*.

As a useful commentary on these bitter animadversions on England —unfortunately, common enough at this day—as well as upon the policy of France, then as now a trifle aggressive, it may not be out of place to extract a passage, cited by M. de Witt in his interesting article on Louvois (published in the 'Revue des Deux Mondes' of February last, p. 12) from a pamphlet by the Baron de Lisola, in the reign of Louis XIV., entitled 'Bouclier d'Etat et de Justice contre le dessein manifestement decouvert de la Monarchie Universelle.' Speaking of the French, Lisola says, 'Never did any people show the least disposition to rebel, but they at once became their allies. Their maxim is to thrust themselves into all sorts of affairs, right and left, and play the part of arbiters everywhere, whether by force or address, by influence or surprise, by threats or kindness. The genius of the nation naturally tends to war—ardent, restless, fond of novelty, desirous of conquest, prompt, meddling, and lending itself to any kind of expedient it thinks conducive to its ends. The policy of their government is always to foment foreign wars, and employ their young nobility at the expense of their neighbours—a policy very much adapted to their own advantage, but extremely inconvenient to the world at large. In fact, it is certain that the genius of the nation cannot bring itself to endure for any length of time the inactivity of peace; it requires fuel for its fire, and, if it cannot find it without, it will try to find it within.'

Of this remarkable and not very flattering sketch, M. de Witt, with great candour and courage, expresses himself thus: 'Modern France has sometimes boasted of having nothing in common with ancient France. Here, however, is an old portrait in which, even at this day, we recognise a certain family likeness. It is not flattering and — Heaven be praised! — there have been times when it has ceased to be like. *It has become a little more so of late. I even know people who wish that the resemblance were complete!*'

What Louvois thought of the portrait we also learn from M. de

Witt (ibid. p. 15). Lisola, as plenipotentiary from the Emperor to the Congress of Cologne in 1684, being on his way from Liége to that city, Louvois apprises the Count d'Estrades of the fact, for the purpose of informing him that he would do good service by making him prisoner, or—*what would be a matter of little moment—by killing him, in case of any resistance on the part of his escort*—equivalent to a positive instruction to assassinate him—'inasmuch as he is a man of a most impertinent tongue, and extremely bitter against France;' adding, 'If you succeed, you cannot conceive to what an extent you will *pay your court to his Majesty*.' What a minister! and, if the minister spoke truth, what a monarch!] 1776.

IV.

ALEXANDER HAMILTON.

ACCORDING to his son and biographer,* this distinguished man was connected with the noble house in Scotland whose name he bore, and we are informed by Dr. Renwick, the president of Columbia College, in his spirited little sketch of Hamilton's life,† that 'pride in the high distinction he obtained has led the European branches of this princely family to claim kindred with him.' On what authority this statement, which I confess seems little probable, is made, does not appear, but if correct, it is highly honourable to the noble house in question, and would show that Hamilton's name was better known formerly in England than it is now. His father, at all events, was of Scottish extraction, being the fourth son of Alexander Hamilton, of the Grange, an Ayrshire gentleman, married to a daughter of Sir John Pollock. He went to the West Indies early in life to establish himself as a merchant, where he married a lady of the name of Fauchette, the descendant of a French Huguenot family. Of the issue of this marriage, the youngest, Alexander, was born in the island of Nevis, then, as now, a possession of the British crown, on the 11th of January, 1757. His father having been unfortunate in business, he was indebted to his mother's family for his early education. At the tender age of twelve, he went to the Danish island of Santa Cruz, to find the means of supporting himself, and was fortunate enough to be admitted into the counting-house of Mr. N. Cruger, an eminent

* Life of Hamilton, by J. C. Hamilton, vol. i. p. 1.

† Ibid., by James Renwick, LL.D., 1845, vol. i. p. 1.



merchant, and excellent man. Letters are still extant, written when he was only fourteen,* which imply a remarkable familiarity with the details of his employment, and show that he was intrusted with the management of his principal's affairs in that island during the latter's necessary absence. A consciousness of his power, however, compelled him to desire a wider and more important sphere of action, and in one of his letters to a young friend, of that time, he expresses a scornful dislike of his actual occupation, and betrays his taste for a military career. 'I conclude,' he says, 'by wishing for a war;' not a very promising wish in the mouth of a commercial clerk. He had not long to wait. Fortunately for him, a literary attempt of some little merit attracted the notice of his friends, and he was furnished with the means of going to New York, and complete his education at King's, now Columbia College, then presided over by Dr. Cooper, a graduate of Oxford. While pursuing his studies in a way to attract the favourable notice of the president of his institution, he at the same time gave a portion of his time to a serious study of the controversy, then rapidly coming to a crisis, between the colonies and the mother country. The time was feverish. Hamilton, at first influenced by his early impressions to espouse the side of England, at length reluctantly gave way to the patriotic impulses around him, seconded by the fruits of his own enquiry, and flung himself with ardour into the continental cause. At an open-air meeting in the city of New York, a youth of slender form and short stature rose to address the assembly. Embarrassed at first, he at length poured forth a flood of argument which was accompanied and followed by loud bursts of applause. The name of the 'gifted stranger was Alexander Hamilton,' a lad of seventeen.

The die was now cast. He had devoted to his new country the first fruits of that eloquence which was to stand her in good stead through many a stormy day; he was now also about to show her the first flashes of that pen which was to throw light on many a dark point, to excite her to the performance of many a great duty, and finally to guide her to that vast

* Works of Hamilton, vol. i. p. 1.



confederation by which her power was consolidated, and which might, had not this faithful counsellor been prematurely destroyed, have preserved and perpetuated its renown. He first enters the lists anonymously, in a public newspaper, and the adversary with whom he wrestles is the head of his own college, Dr. Cooper. Congress having been attacked in a letter under the signature of a Westchester Farmer, Hamilton replies; there is a rejoinder; this is followed by another reply. Men, in their speculations about the authorship, attribute it to this and that experienced hand. No one dreamt of the boy orator; no one thought, to use the rather figurative language of an historian as esteemed on this side of the Atlantic as the other, that it was 'the young and gifted West Indian who so reasoned as though the voices of the Puritans had blended with the soft tropical breezes that rocked his cradle; or, rather, as one who had caught glimpses of the divine archetype of freedom.'* I am not quite sure that I understand what is here said, but I take it to mean, possibly, that he pleaded the cause of liberty without sourness; that the sternness of his logic was tempered by the generous warmth and sweetness of his tone; and, finally, that he had caught sight of the true and fundamental principles on which genuine and enlightened liberty must ever rest. It was certainly a performance creditable at any age, a very remarkable one for a boy of eighteen. It is not long before we see all the germs of his character developing, especially his love of liberty wherever it is, his hatred of despotism wherever that is. Just now the latter is exhibiting itself in the shape of mob violence. Dr. Cooper has made himself obnoxious by his Toryism, that is, his loyal sympathies; the mob, therefore, attack King's College; Hamilton interposes, and expostulates with them; the Doctor roused out of his sleep, and fancying his good pupil is exciting the people to rebellion, cries out: 'Don't mind him, he is crazy, he is crazy!' Warned, however, by another student, he has barely time to escape, half-dressed, to a place of refuge. On another occasion, the mob make an attack on the house of one Rivington, a Tory

* Bancroft, History of the United States, &c., vol. vi. p. 129.

printer; Hamilton does his best to prevent it, but fails. This was his second defeat in the cause of liberty; it was not his last.

The crisis had now arrived. The dispute with the mother country demanded an appeal to arms. Preparing for it, the young student had studied military tactics, especially directing his attention to them in connection with artillery movements. Presently he is captain of a volunteer company of artillery. He is soon at work; he distinguishes himself in the disastrous battle of Long Island, where he covers the retreat of the army. Again, he is noticed at White Plains; and when the army is forced to cross the Raritan in its retreat, he takes up a good position, keeps the enemy at bay until night-fall, and thus aids in enabling the American army to effect their purpose with safety. The eye of his commander has been upon him, and, when the army retires into winter quarters at Morristown, in 1777, Washington appoints him his military secretary, with the rank of colonel. He had lost no time: a commercial clerk at fourteen; a college student at sixteen; a public orator at seventeen; a political pamphleteer at eighteen; a captain of artillery, in active service, at nineteen; and the military secretary of Washington, with the rank of colonel, at the same age. Thenceforth, from the nature of his appointment, his position was more fixed; but his services were most valuable. Many were the important papers drafted by him, and mainly due to him, while thus employed, which he was for four years, when, apparently on account of some slight misunderstanding with Washington, the result of a little impetuosity of temper on both sides, Hamilton, to his general's great regret, resigned. It would appear, however, that he had disliked his position, as interfering with his military advancement, and as placing him in a kind of personal dependence, which, however distinguished, he did not relish. He, moreover, had just married the second daughter of General Schuyler, and was anxious for a separate military command, both as a means of giving him an opportunity for military distinction, and allowing him time to prosecute his study of the law, to which profession he meant to devote himself on the conclusion of peace. He now began to occupy



himself with financial matters, and, in an anonymous letter to Robert Morris, indicated the means, afterwards acted upon, of redeeming public credit, and providing permanent resources for the country. It was high time; the continental paper-money had fallen to nothing, of which an amusing illustration was furnished by the hotel-bill of some British officers who had been captured with Burgoyne, which they published on their return to England. It amounted to some thousand dollars, and was liquidated by two or three guineas. 'This communication,' says Dr. Renwick, speaking of the letter, 'is marked by clear and sound views, and was far in advance of the knowledge of the day.' He obtained a command in the army operating against Lord Cornwallis, and distinguished himself at the head of one of the attacking columns at the capture of Yorktown, which led to the surrender of the British army. In 1783, Washington — as appears from a letter of Madison's — acting under his prudent advice, was enabled to arrest an impending mutiny in the army, which might have led to the most disastrous results. In the next year, under the signature of 'Phocion,' he published a powerful remonstrance against some outrageous proceedings against the loyalists in the state of New York, which, combined with the energy of Clinton, the governor, effectually put an end to them. As usual, taking the side of liberty, he interfered, says Renwick, p. 227, 'in person to disperse tumultuous assemblages; and in more than one instance protected real or suspected Tories from violence.' He also took a leading part in prevailing upon the states to permit themselves to be taxed, for the purpose of liquidating public obligations, and providing for the current expenses of the country. He contributed largely to bring about the convention for remodelling the constitution, in which, as is better known than most parts of his history, he took a brilliant and leading part. Unfortunately, we have but a meagre knowledge of the details of the proceedings of this convention; but the opinion of one of its members respecting the services of Hamilton is on record: 'If,' says Dr. W. S. Johnson, 'the constitution should not succeed, Mr. Hamilton is less responsible for such results than any other member;



for he fully and frankly pointed out to the Convention the imperfection to which it was liable; and, if it answered the fond expectations of the public, the community would be more indebted to him than any other member; for, after its essential outlines were agreed to, he laboured most indefatigably to heal those infirmities and to guard against the evils to which they might expose it.*

Having thus so largely contributed to the adoption of the Federal constitution, he afterwards in the 'Federalist,' in conjunction with Madison, and most brilliantly supported by him, clearly explained to the American people the true character of their new constitution, and successfully recommended it to their intelligence and esteem. It was of this remarkable production that the 'Edinburgh Review,' in one of its early numbers (vol. xii. p. 47), spoke as 'a work little known in Europe, but which exhibits an extent and fulness of information, a profundity of research, and an acuteness of understanding, which would have done honour to the most illustrious statesmen of ancient or modern times.' Hamilton was now in his thirty-second year.

In 1786 he was elected a member of the New York Assembly, where, by his eloquence and admirable measures, he composed a most alarming feud between New York and the State of Vermont, that had nearly led to bloodshed and the withdrawal of that State from the Union and even its re-annexation to England.

In 1789 he entered on his duties as Secretary of the Treasury, under Washington. Of his services in this capacity, of the factious opposition he met with, and the cruel persecution he underwent, M. de Witt has given us a general and interesting account. Of his financial achievements the late Mr. Webster has given us the result in a single phrase:— 'He touched the corpse of public credit, and it at once sprang to its feet.' In 1795 he again returned to private life, a poor though distinguished man, to devote himself to those professional pursuits which were rapidly leading him to wealth, and had already obtained him brilliant forensic

* Renwick, p. 215.

fame, when he so prematurely fell a victim to the revenge of Burr. Once, indeed, these pursuits had been interrupted, when Washington, summoned from his retirement again to command the armies of his country, threatened by the aggressive policy of France, insisted, in defiance of Adams's paltry jealousy, and in spite of being compelled, under his sense of duty, to override the reasonable pretensions of men whom he highly esteemed, upon having Hamilton for his second in command. It was in reference to this appointment that he wrote these memorable words to Adams: — 'By some he is considered an ambitious man, and therefore a dangerous one. That he is ambitious I shall readily grant, *but it is of that laudable kind that prompts a man to excel in whatever he takes in hand.* He is enterprising, quick in his perceptions, *and his judgement is intuitively great* — qualities essential to a great military character, and therefore I repeat, *his loss will be irreparable.*' An intimate knowledge of Hamilton for two-and-twenty years was the voucher for this testimony. When Washington wrote it, he had evidence in his hand, that whatever might be Hamilton's ambition, there was a motive still more dominant in his mind, and that was devotion to the public good. And it is touching to see in his letters to his ancient chief how his ingenuous and manfully-acknowledged consciousness of his fitness for the post intended for him, backed by what he knew to be the judgement of the country, struggled with his apprehensions, lest Washington by thus insisting on his appointment should be raising up embarrassments and annoyances for himself. It is manifest that whatever momentary irritation had existed between these two really great men, it had as instantly passed away. Too cognizant of each other's qualities not to look upon one other with cordial esteem and admiration, they continued to do so to the end. The words 'affection' and 'affectionate' are invariably found in the valedictory clauses of their letters, always in those of Hamilton, accompanied by a deferential expression of personal respect. When death so suddenly carried off the elder, the youngest of them speaks of himself as orphaned and bereaved: — 'He was an Ægis very essential to me,' is the filial excla-



mation of this powerful and intrepid mind. 'The irreparable loss of an inestimable man,' is his personal as well as patriotic regret. 'There can be few who equally with me participate in the loss you deplore,' he writes in his letter of condolence to Mrs. Washington, and she, in her reply, desires he should be informed 'that she is sensible that his loss as well as hers is irreparable!' Hamilton, without seeking it, had obtained his revenge. When Washington died, Jefferson had for some time utterly forfeited his confidence and esteem: Hamilton had just received a signal proof that he was rich in the possession of both.

I have said in a note that England would have been his proper field. A competent and most eminent authority has expressed his opinion that by his grasp and comprehensiveness as a statesman he was qualified to be conspicuous in the largest spheres. We have it on the authority of Mr. Ticknor, that Talleyrand, who knew Hamilton personally well, and had the highest opinion of his talents, being on some occasion asked if his superiority would have been equally marked had he had to deal with larger masses of men, made this characteristic reply, '*il a diviné l'Europe.*'

Such was Hamilton. 'His name,' said Fisher Ames, who had been the witness of his career, 'would have honoured Greece in the days of Aristides. May Heaven, the guardian of our liberties, grant that our country may be fruitful of Hamiltons, and faithful to their glory!' It has been neither. It has neither produced more Hamiltons nor been faithful to the glory of the one it had. It has been wilfully and fatally false to his example; and now, in this hour of its affliction and abasement, has not even the poor consolation of being able to exclaim, *ubi lapsus, quid feci!*]



V.

IN the discussions which were constantly occurring at that time respecting the advantages of monarchy as illustrated by England, compared with republicanism, as yet a thing but recently on its trial, the great *cheval de guerre* of those who wished to find fault with the former was the actual and imputed corruption of the British Legislature. Pressed to recollect the advantages that more than countervailed this defect, such persons would be often driven to assert that no amount of good was of any account which was connected with such an evil; to which the reply would sometimes be, that by the very fact of the connection, it was always practically unimportant, and might be often overruled to good. Thus, through an impatient antagonism to a tedious cuckoo argument, men whose whole lives had been devoted to the cause of free institutions and good government were made to appear apologists for corruption. This tiresome and irritating form of controversy led on one occasion to a retort which showed that corruption was not special to a monarchy, and to a misunderstanding which was near having important results for the future of America. In 1797, General Hamilton's brother-in-law, Mr. Church, who had just come from England, where, as one of the committee of the 'Society of the Friends of the People,' as a personal and political friend of Mr. Fox, and as one of the thirty-eight in the House of Commons who divided in favour of Mr. Grey's motion in 1793 for an enquiry into the expediency of a reform in Parliament, he was of course assailed as a Jacobin, though then and to his dying day profoundly attached to his country's institutions, happened to be present at a dinner-party where the merits of the English Constitution were the subject of discussion. The



argument from corruption was soon pressed with all its extravagance — 'Parliament was corrupt — all public men in England were corrupt — the whole English people were corrupt; — so much for monarchy!' The unfortunate Englishman, ex-member of the corrupt House of Commons, unable to stem this exaggeration, fires up and retaliates. 'But where is there no corruption? It is inevitable; — it is one of the universal means of influencing men. You have it here. It is openly bruited that one of your citizens and leading democrats, no less a person than Col. Burr, has accepted a bribe from the Holland Land Company.' The thrust was a home one, and so one of the discomfited went and babbled of it to Burr, who found it requisite to get angry, and demand a retractation and apology. Mr. Church, in reply, stated that he merely cited a rumour — that he personally could know nothing either of its truth or falsehood — that he (Burr) must know of hundreds of men who openly professed to believe it, and that it was to them he should address himself, and not to him. Colonel Burr then offered one of two alternatives: either a declaration that Mr. Church did not believe in the report, or a duel. Mr. Church of course chose the duel. The meeting took place at Weehawken, or Hoboken, as it was then called, the usual place of rendezvous for such affairs. After an exchange of shots, in which Burr had a very narrow escape, the seconds interfered, and the parties shook hands. Here, then, was a man who, from his desire to redress abuses, had been called a Jacobin in his own country, actually put in jeopardy of his life for having been irritated by the prevalent style of argument into a sort of justification of that corruption in England, which he despised and deplored. It may be easily conceived that Hamilton's exaggerated expressions, when at all serious, were referrible to the same cause.]



VI.

August 13, 1791. *Notes of a Conversation between Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson.*

'THOMAS JEFFERSON mentioned to him (A. Hamilton) a letter received from John Adams, disavowing Publicola, and denying that he ever entertained a wish to bring this country under a hereditary executive, or introduce a hereditary branch of legislature, &c. Alexander Hamilton, condemning Mr. Adams's writings, and most particularly Davila, as having a tendency to weaken the present government, declared in substance as follows: "I own it is my own opinion, though I do not publish it in Dan or Beersheba, that the present government is not that which will answer the ends of society by giving stability and protection to its rights, and that it will probably be found expedient to go into the British form. However, since we have undertaken the experiment, I am for giving it a fair course, whatever my expectations may be. The success, indeed, so far, is greater than I had expected, and therefore, at present, success seems more possible than it had done heretofore; and there are still other and other stages of improvement, which, if the present does not succeed, may be tried, and ought to be tried, before we give up the republican form altogether; for that mind must be very depraved which would not prefer the equality of political rights, which is the foundation of pure republicanism, if it can be obtained consistently with order. Therefore, whoever by his writings disturbs the present order of things, is really blameable, however pure his intentions may be, and he was sure Mr. Adams's were pure." This is the



substance of a declaration made in much more lengthy terms, and which seemed to be more formal than usual for a private conversation between two, and as if intended to qualify some less guarded expressions which had been dropped on former occasions. Thomas Jefferson has committed it to writing in the moment of A. Hamilton's leaving the room.' *

[It is rather strange that, believing this to be a formal explanation, Jefferson should not have been at the pains to give a fuller and more exact report of so important a conversation. But perhaps the wonder should be that he has preserved any record of it. He might suppose, indeed, that Hamilton would keep some minute of it, though that does not appear to have been the case. It may fairly be a question whether Hamilton believed in any such euthanasia as that of passing into the British form. Looking at the temper of a large part of the country, he would rather fear a transition through democracy into an arbitrary monarchy. This is probably what he did fear.]

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* Jefferson's Works, vol. ix. p. 99.



VII.

IN that terrible analysis, entitled 'Observations on Jefferson's Writings,' by Major Lee, in vindication of his father from certain aspersions in the posthumous works of this statesman, there is a strong presumption raised that Jefferson was capable of any species of artifice which his necessities required, and any amount of misrepresentation that would serve his ends. Nevertheless, it is possible that some of his worst acts may receive another solution: take his covert attacks upon Washington, and his malignant hostility to Hamilton. No doubt they may be explained by his envy of these eminent men, and his conviction that they were in different ways a bar to his ambition—the former on account of his immense popularity and the certainty of his occupying the presidency as long as he desired it, the other on account of his great talents and the probability of his obtaining a great ascendancy in the country. Still there is reason to infer, from the mode he took, and successfully too, to blacken them, namely, by charging the one inferentially and indirectly, and the other directly, with a design to restore monarchy, that he was acting in some degree under the influence of a mental delusion which had faith in its own fiction. The notion, for instance, that Hamilton's project of a national bank was a gigantic attempt at corruption, for the purpose of overthrowing the republic, which he is constantly referring to, in season and out of season, and which is perpetually rising like a terrible spectre before him, can hardly be accounted for in any other way. It is the remark of an intelligent American writer, not indisposed to accord him a large share of merit, that 'the objections then urged to the financial



system of Hamilton are now, with most other matters of opposition to the first administration, considered unsound. Most of them seem at this day *almost factious*; some of them as nearly *puerile*.'* But it is not merely the puerility, or rather absolute imbecility of these charges, as preferred by so intelligent a person, with a vehemence and earnestness that indicate an unquestionable confidence in them, which alone suggests the suspicion of a delusion; there is, moreover, the remarkable unconsciousness on his part, that by his mode of urging them, he is not only damaging the person he means to damage, but that he is insulting those he does not wish to insult, that he is assigning to himself a part which covers him with disgrace, and that he is sometimes giving them a personal application, which, instead of supporting, refutes them. Mark, for instance, what he says to Washington, who had called upon him for an explanation of his differences with Hamilton. 'These views' (he is speaking of the foreign policy which had been adopted), 'thus made to prevail' (through Hamilton's cabals, he means), 'their execution fell upon me, and I can safely appeal to you, who have seen all my letters and proceedings, whether or not I have not carried them out as sincerely as *if they had been my own, though I ever considered them as inconsistent with the honour and interest of our country*.'† Now, could any man, in full possession of his faculties, having the smallest amount of self-respect, have penned such a passage? In the first place, Hamilton had nothing to do officially with the foreign policy of the country; if he interfered improperly, then Jefferson must have been utterly unfit for his office, by the very fact of his submitting to it. Secondly, Hamilton had no more power than the lowest clerk in his department definitively to determine the foreign policy; that must rest exclusively with the President, with or without the advice of his cabinet. Hamilton, in the cabinet, might openly influence his opinion, as he certainly and frequently did, but that opinion adopted and acted on, the act and its responsibility

* 'Party Leaders,' by J. G. Baldwin, New York, 1855.

† Hamilton's Works, vol. iii. p. 462.

became exclusively the President's; consequently, to say of the act that it was inconsistent with the honour and interests of the country, was to tell Washington that he was either so stupid as not to perceive its drift, or so wicked as to sanction it.* Thirdly, Jefferson boasts that he carried out these measures as sincerely *as if they had been his own*, that is, that he carried out what he thought the treason of another man to the honour and interests of the State, *as sincerely as if it were his own*, without a protest, without a remonstrance to the President, without an appeal to the public, but with a submissiveness and a disregard of his duty for which, on his own showing, he deserved to be impeached. Is this explicable, unless we admit the hypothesis of a partial craze?

Now for a specimen of his illustrations! Talking one day to Washington about his usual bugbear, a monarchy, the latter, he says, told him he did not think there were ten men in the country who wished for a monarchy. But Jefferson knew better. 'I recalled to his memory,' he says, 'a dispute at his own table, a little before we left Philadelphia, between General Schuyler, and Pinckney and myself on the other, wherein the former maintained the position, that hereditary descent was as likely to produce good magistrates as election. I told him, that though the people were sound, there was a numerous sect who had *monarchy in contemplation*, and that the Secretary of the Treasury (Hamilton) was one.'†

Now surely these were extraordinary conspirators, who thus blurted out their views at the President's own table, and in the presence of the great republican dragon himself! Surely the character of the very man who talked in this way ought

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* Washington had himself, so Jefferson tells us, pointed out this alternative. 'To censure the Administration is to censure me, for it supposes that measures are adopted against my opinion. This amounts to saying that I am too negligent to attend to them, or too stupid to comprehend them.' But Jefferson either could not or would not see this. See his Works, vol. ix. p. 117.

† Jefferson's Works, vol. ix. p. 122. What a pity he does not give us Washington's remarks on this random talk! He must have said something. It is clear he did not encourage the delusion.

to have been a clear and manifest assurance, if any such could possibly have been required, that such opinions were speculative views, which could be entertained by the purest and best-tried patriots. Why, this monarchical conspirator had risked more, sacrificed more, had personally laboured and endured more, than Jefferson himself. It is of him Bancroft, when speaking of the earliest movements in the province of New York, says, 'Philip Schuyler and the aged Edward Livingstone, in spite of their vast possessions, were among the first to uphold their country's rights.' And the same historian, though willing enough to depreciate him in some respects, in order, I suspect, to extenuate the infamous and ungrateful conduct of the New England people to him, is obliged to render full homage to his integrity, and to the devotion with which, under the influence of 'a sincere and ardent patriotism,' in spite of the more than one affront from Congress, instigated by the New-Englanders, jealous of New York, and suspicious of everybody not of their own set, he 'willingly used his credit, influence, and wide connections to bring out the resources of his native province!' When he and the gallant Montgomery, disgusted with the insubordination of the New England troops * under their command, think of retiring, Washington writes a letter earnestly entreating them to stand by him. To him, too, in 1781, when there is a question of the appointment of a Minister of War, Washington, urging his acceptance of it, writes: 'Our affairs are brought to an awful crisis. Nothing will recover them but the vigorous exertions of men of abilities, who know our wants and the best means of supplying them. Without meaning you a compliment, *you* have those abilities.' Such was, and continued to be,

* 'The New Englanders,' wrote Montgomery, 'are the worst stuff imaginable for soldiers. They are home-sick. Three regiments are melted away, and yet not a man dead of any distemper! There is such an equality among them, that the officers have no authority, and there are very few among them in whose spirit I have confidence. The privates are all generals—but not soldiers, and so jealous, that it is impossible, though a man risk his person, to escape the imputation of treachery!'—*Bancroft*, vol. vii. ch. lii. p. 110.



Washington's confidence in this terrible conspirator. And this Secretary of the Treasury, too — 'this leader of the Satanic band!' Take Jefferson's own description of him, written six-and-twenty years after this conversation: — 'His was a singular character. Of acute understanding, disinterested, honest, honourable in all private transactions, amiable in society, and duly valuing virtue in private life; and yet so bewitched and perverted by the British form as to be under a thorough conviction that corruption was necessary to government!'* Not a syllable here of monarchical designs. There is the old nonsense about corruption; but Jefferson had committed himself too far, as M. de Witt has well explained, to throw overboard the whole litter of calumnies which were essential to the justification of his conduct. Mr. Tucker, the apologist — not the biographer — of Jefferson, but too sensible and honourable a man to sanction the abominable aspersions on Hamilton, accounts for them by saying that Jefferson's feeling towards him amounted to 'ill-will and personal dislike.' No doubt; but how to account for this? Envy — *pace* Mr. Bancroft — may have done its part; but, looking to all the facts, it seems probable that the solution, in some measure, is, that Jefferson was the dupe of his own fictions, and

* It seems almost like retributive justice, that, to use the words of M. de Witt, in his History of Washington, &c. p. 355: — 'At the very moment (1795) when, in the hope of shaking Washington's influence, and compelling him to abandon his support of Jay's Treaty, the democratic party was assailing him with the epithets of Englishman, corruptor, and robber, one of its leading members was suspected of having taken French money:' this was Randolph, the Attorney-General, who, having been shown, at a meeting of the Cabinet, an intercepted letter which confirmed suspicions already existing against him, betrayed marks of great confusion, and, being allowed to retire for the purpose of collecting himself, sent in his resignation, and then revenged himself on Washington by a libellous pamphlet. Jefferson, of course, affected to think Randolph innocent, but complained of him as not being a sure card, as often giving the oyster to his opponents, and the shell to his friends, the Republicans and the French. This was very unfair to the latter, who had paid him for the oyster.

believed for a while in the imaginary danger he had conjured up—in a word, that he had a craze, and, through a singular combination of circumstances, a craze which, however it may lower him in the estimation of posterity, raised him to distinction among his contemporaries. At all events, it is more agreeable to admit this plea in his favour than to believe him, as we must otherwise do, a vile intriguer and consummate scoundrel.

Jefferson, at one period of his life, at least, was a political fanatic; and, as Mr. Froude justly remarks, fanaticism and deceit are closely allied, and the deceiver is often the first to be deceived, and the last to be conscious.*]

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* In the famous letter to Mr. Van-Buren, in 1824 (a lame attempt at explaining away the Mazzei letter), there are some symptoms of recovery from his delusions. Jefferson had now discovered that Washington was nearly as sound a republican as himself, coming short of him only in a lesser confidence in the ultimate success of the republican experiment. Of Hamilton, he says, while frankly avowing his admiration of the British Constitution, he professed 'that the spirit of the country was so fundamentally republican, that it would be visionary to think of introducing monarchy;' and that it was, therefore, the duty of the administration to obey the wishes of their constituents.—Jefferson's *Works*, vol. vii. 362–371.



VIII.

Abstract of Genet's Correspondence with the French Directory.

1793. WE here give a summary of the extracts from the correspondence of Citizen Genet, the plenipotentiary from the French Directory, to the United States in 1793. In their instructions to M. Genet, the Directory, after censuring the Machiavelian policy adopted by former French governments with regard to the United States, and their contempt for the interest of the Americans, instructs M. Genet to declare that it is animated with very different views, that it is disposed to accept, as the commercial basis of the relations between the two countries, the proposals made by General Washington and Mr. Jefferson to Citizen Ternant, and not only to found a treaty upon them, but to make them the grounds of a vast compact between the two countries. That, in virtue of this compact, the French people would proceed with their accustomed energy to emancipate Spanish America, to throw open the navigation of the Mississippi to the inhabitants of Kentucky, to deliver their former brethren in Louisiana from the Spanish yoke, and perhaps restore the bright star of Canada to the American constellation. But, anticipating that the American government might be disposed to pursue an undecided policy on this matter, it instructs Citizen Genet, meanwhile, to take whatever measures he can, consistent with his position, to instil into Louisiana and other American provinces bordering on the United States, a desire for liberty and independence. As the inhabitants of Kentucky would naturally be favourable to such a policy, Citizen



Genet is further instructed to send emissaries both into Kentucky and Louisiana, and to spend whatever sum he may think requisite for the object in view. 'It is with the Minister of Foreign Affairs,' proceeds the Directory, 'that Citizen Genet will correspond on these different subjects, and it is from him he will receive all the orders of the nation. His relation with the other ministers will be confined to administrative details connected with their respective departments,* and he will take care to make a brief report of these to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, in order that the latter may always have under his eyes the whole of the operations which the French agents are conducting in reference to foreigners. 1793.

On January 17, 1793, the Directory, on the report of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, issues fresh sets of instructions to Citizen Genet. The first has reference to the basis of the new treaty of commerce and alliance, which Citizen Genet is empowered to negotiate, one of the provisions of which will be the throwing open the ports in the French West India Islands to American commerce, provided the United States will guarantee their possession to the French people.† A second clause provides that a certain amount of blank letters of marque should be sent to Citizen Genet, who is authorised to deliver them to French and American shipowners in the case of a maritime war; and a third for the transmission also of a certain number of blank military commissions up to the rank of captain inclusively, to be given to Indian chiefs, to induce them, should the opportunity arise, to take arms against the enemies of the republic. The second of these instructions empowers Genet to make any assignment he may Jan. 17.

* [This virtual warning to their agent, not to take any of the other members of the Cabinet into his confidence, is noteworthy. They evidently speculated on Jefferson's Gallomania so much as to believe he would abet their scandalous purposes; and, we have seen, to a certain extent they were right.]

† [Again the miserable demand for protection. The 'generous Republic' was as fond of the weighty *quid pro quo* as the 'Machiavelian monarchy.']



1793. think proper of the amount due from the United States to the Republic, in case the former should not have funds in hand for that purpose, and to notify to the French government in dollars or livres the amount of the bills he should draw upon it in carrying out his instructions.

Feb. 24. On February 24, 1793, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the French Republic informs Citizen Genet of a new decree of the National Convention, which offers the Americans 'all the advantages they can desire to obtain,' and instructs him to make the most of this concession, by means of anonymous articles, especially in the Boston and Baltimore newspapers, as the best way of avoiding the *suspicion of being their author*, and of bringing out the full value of it; but the more he acts in this way on public opinion, the more secret must be his negotiations with the President and Senate, in order not to excite the suspicion of the enemies of France, and to prevent their caballing against her. He was further enjoined to rely with confidence on the good feeling of the President and Messrs. Jefferson, Butler, and Madison, who are represented as all being equally well disposed. He is directed to have a good correspondent in Boston, through whom to influence the people of New England. As to the Southern States, France, it said, is pretty sure of their support. The war with Spain, he says, appearing inevitable, no time must be lost in preparing for the emancipation of Louisiana, for which Citizen Genet had already received all the powers he required.

March 10. Again: on March 10, 1793, the Minister of Foreign Affairs writes to Genet, with considerable anxiety, respecting a formal audience given by the Spanish King, on February 18, to the United States' Commissioners, which he considers as the indication of a desire to come to a better standing with the American people. He therefore urges Citizen Genet to neutralise it, by pressing on the American government several considerations why they should not treat with Spain, and especially this—that by suitable measures, taken in conjunction with the French Republic, they might easily become masters of the navigation of the Mississippi; that a very simple way of effecting this would be to assist the people of



Louisiana to free themselves of Spain. Masters of New Orleans, they would be in no danger either from the English fleet or from their Governor, and could thus make a valuable diversion in favour of the arms of France, by giving the King of Spain reason to tremble for Mexico, wherein revolutionary principles, creeping in by degrees, must finally secure the independence of all Spanish America. He was further desired to inform the American Government, that the negotiations it had just opened with Spain, at such a moment, would be regarded as offensive by the French Republic, especially after the favours granted to American commerce. 1793.

On April 16, 1793, Citizen Genet writes his first despatch from Charleston, into which he had been driven by stress of weather. The frigate had been fifteen days doubling Cape Finisterre, whence it had been obliged to run down to catch the trade winds to the south of the Azores, and, after forty-eight days' voyage, had reached the coast of Carolina. An immense crowd had assembled to see him embark. He describes his reception as very flattering, and Governor Moultrie as entering at once into his views, allowing him to arm privateers so as not to compromise the neutrality of the United States, ordering the fortifications of the harbour to be put in a state of repair, and zealously seconding him in carrying out his instructions for provisioning the navy, armies, and colonies of the Republic. He announces his intention of proceeding to Philadelphia by land, in spite of the difficulties of doing so, and hopes to reach Philadelphia in fifteen days. April 16.

On May 18, in another despatch, he says, that during his journey he had produced a powerful and favourable effect wherever he passed; that he received numerous addresses of felicitation; and that, with all the advantages of this reception, he had, the day before, presented the letter of the National Convention and his credentials to the President of the United States, who had left Mount Vernon, his country seat, just before his arrival in Virginia, and whom, therefore, he could not visit on his way. He speaks of his triumphal entry into the city of Pennsylvania, and of the delight inspired by his arrival in the hearts of all true Americans. In a postscript, he mentions that he will the next day have his May 18.



1793. first confidential interview with Mr. Jefferson, Minister of Foreign Affairs, from whose principles, experience, talents, and devotedness to the common cause, the most gratifying results in favour of the great interests of humanity were to be expected.

May 31. On the 31st he again alludes, in a despatch, to the extraordinary warmth which he has received, the addresses he gets from all parts of the States, and endless fêtes given in his honour. He adds, that the *sans-culotte* privateers he had equipped at Charlestown had taken eight large English vessels.

June 19. On June 19 he acknowledges that, in spite of his marvellous popularity, all is not quite so smooth as he could desire, and rejoices that he did not at once come to Philadelphia, where, so he informs us, aristocracy had struck deep roots, and where it was probable he would not have been at once acknowledged, had he not been backed by the support he got in the south. Nevertheless, all was succeeding beyond his hopes; 'but the old man, Washington,' he says, 'so different from him whose name history has inscribed, 'does not pardon my success nor the ardour with which the whole city rushed out to visit me at the very moment when a handfull of English merchants were in the act of thanking him for his proclamation. He obstructs my progress in a thousand ways, and compels me to agitate in secret for the meeting of Congress, the majority of which, led by the best heads in the American Union, would be decidedly in our favour. Meanwhile I am provisioning the Antilles, exciting the Canadians to throw off the yoke of England, arming the Kentuckians, and preparing an expedition by sea which will support their attack upon New Orleans. Noailles and Talon are here; before my arrival they had presented letters from the pretended Regent to the President of the United States, which the old man had the weakness to open; but since the people have recognised me, they dare not show themselves more: were it worth while, I could have them expelled.'

July 30. On July 30, 1793, the minister writes, in reply, a very severe despatch to Genet, refusing to believe, after a comparison of the American newspapers with his accounts, that his reception had been of so very marvellous a character,



censuring his proceedings, warning him he had exceeded his powers, and reminding him that his instructions were to treat with the government, not with a portion of the people; to be the organ of the French Republic and not the head of an American party, and to adhere scrupulously to the forms prescribed for the communication between Foreign Ministers and the government. He intimates his suspicion that Genet is in the hands of ignorant and ill-disposed persons, and ridicules the idea of his owing his being immediately recognised to his influence over the people; he is reminded of what he had said respecting the obstructions he was receiving from Washington, and warned that his business was to treat with the American government; that, misled by a false popularity, he had indisposed towards himself the only man he should regard as the organ of the American people, and that, if that man had thrown impediments in his way, the fault must be entirely his own. After a severe philippic he sneers at, without disapproving, what Genet had said respecting his arming the Kentuckians and Canadians, at nearly 600 miles distance from him, and while overwhelmed with his fêtes. The minister is equally puzzled to know how Genet could have managed to get up a naval expedition against New Orleans, and hopes to receive the particulars of these important operations in the next despatch. He concludes with an admonition to Genet, that he cannot prepare at Philadelphia an armament to be employed against New Orleans, without compromising the neutrality of the United States, and offending the government, winding up with the observation, that in no point of view can he approve the means resorted to for the purpose of carrying out his *patriotic and praiseworthy purpose*, and recommending him to be no longer dazzled by the false popularity which had blinded him, but to endeavour to obtain the confidence of the President and Congress. 1793.

In two other despatches, of July 31 and August 15, Genet continues to write in the same strain as before; speaks of the 'Fayettist' Washington as embarrassing his operations, represents the English party and their representatives in the Cabinet, Knox and Hamilton, as July 31, August 15.



1793. alarmed at his excessive popularity, and everywhere spreading about that he was endeavouring to excite the Americans against their government, and meditating an appeal from it to the people, which, in fact, it richly deserves, but which, being false, he has, he says, contradicted in very strong terms in a letter to General Washington, calling upon him to give the lie to these two rumours. He announces his intention to publish Washington's reply, together with his own letter, to be followed soon afterwards by his correspondence with Jefferson, 'a man full of good qualities, but feeble enough to put his hand to what he does not approve,* and officially to defend measures which, in his conversations and anonymous writings,† he condemns.'

Sept. 19. In his next despatch, September 19, he continues to insult and impudently to defy Washington, whom, he says, he

Oct. 7. is about to paralyse by means of the people.‡ On the 7th of the following month he describes the way in which he had been received by Washington the day after his arrival at Philadelphia, which, he says, was cold, and reports the substance of the conversation as found in a note at page 199. It also contains another striking passage, part of which is in note, page 203, in which Genet says, 'I have, however, observed in his official papers a reserve which convinces me that this man, a demi-caractère, aims at securing his place, however the issue may turn out.' He mentions the indig-

* [We here recognise the echo of his own words in his apologetic form for subscribing views, which, at the time, too, he says, he thought treasonable.]

† [Alluding, doubtless, to his connection with a certain newspaper, of which he would be sure to make a boast to Genet.]

‡ ['This friend of La Fayette' (so he speaks of him)—'who affects to decorate his drawing-rooms with the medallions of Caput and his family, who has received the letters of the self-styled Regent (afterwards Louis XVIII.), brought by Noailles and Talon, and who continues to see these scoundrels—calls meanarchist and Jacobin, and threatens to have me recalled, because I would not crouch to the Federalists, ill-disposed to us, and whose only object is to establish an autocracy.' It is evident the Queen Mab of Monticello had been with him.]



nation of the government at his proceedings, and the charges preferred against him by two men, whom he describes as being in the pay of England, namely, Jay, Chief-Justice of the Supreme Court, and Senator King, of violating the law—treatment, he says, which elicited an address to him from the people of New York, by whom he was brilliantly received, expressing their entire confidence in him, and to which he replied in a manner that convinced them that he had no intention to drag them into war. He adds, that having written a letter of remonstrance to Washington, the latter replied through Mr. Jefferson, that a president in the United States was in too high a position to correspond with an agent of a foreign power. He says that he printed these letters, which had produced an excellent effect upon the people, but had so enraged Washington as to induce him to insist upon his (Genet's) dismissal, notice of which had been communicated to him through Mr. Jefferson. He annexes to his despatch a list of the reports he was about to forward to his government, also an account of his voyage and his popular reception in the United States. 1793.

On October 7 he reports what he had done in the way of carrying out the instructions of the Directory for the emancipation of the Canadians, the French inhabitants of the Illinois country, and Louisiana. In one of these reports he makes the statements respecting Jefferson's concurrence with his plans in the first instance, which is referred to at p. 201. They also contained the correspondence between Genet and General Clark, who, in a letter from Louisville, on February 2, 1793, apprises the former of a design he had formed to get possession of Upper Louisiana, and of his being, therefore, in a position to command the best information requisite for such an enterprise. He says, he is constantly receiving intelligence from persons in different cities of New Spain, who are willing to aid him. With four hundred men only he is of opinion he could succeed against Upper Louisiana, and against New Orleans with eight hundred, to be backed by only one or two frigates, and requiring an outlay of not more than 3,000*l.* On July 12, 1793, Genet replies to the 'citizen general' that he accepts his offers, and that Citizen Michaux, Oct. 7.



1793. bearer of his letter, will take charge of the administrative arrangements. He adds that he will write to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs to confer upon him the rank of Brigadier-General in the French army, enclosing a document authorising him to take command of the independent and revolutionary legion of the Mississippi, to appoint all the officers into corps, which he is to arm, equip, and direct, as he may think most expedient for promoting the interest of the French Republic, and the most signal success of the cause of liberty, and the independence of nations.

Dec. 10. On December 10, 1793, he announces that 'Congress is in session, Washington is unmasked, America sullied. I send you the address of the friend of Lafayette, and the reply of the House of Representatives. It is as insignificant as that of the Senate will be.' He adds that the Cabinet of St. James's has intimidated every one; that there is not a true patriot in the country, not a friend of France or its representative, who is not convinced that the old man, Washington, has merely said what he was told to say, in order to save the United States from instantaneous chastisement. Nevertheless, he declares that, sustained by the people, he will pick up the glove that has been thrown down to him, that he will go and present himself at Philadelphia, and that if Congress, after examining his correspondence then before it, does not do him justice, he will bring Washington himself into the supreme court of the United States, and there compel him to appear at its bar and support his assertions. He refers to the public papers in evidence of the esteem which he has had, as well as to a letter from Samuel Adams, in which that gentleman warmly approves his conduct, 'and deplores the calamities to which he has been exposed, and trusts that his residence in the United States as minister plenipotentiary, will be as personally satisfactory to himself as it must be useful in the cause of liberty and the rights of man.' *

* [Taking into account the countenance which he had at first received from Jefferson, and the aid he actually obtained from that occasionally demented man, the sympathy manifested for him by



On October 16, nearly a month before the latter despatch, 1793.
the committee of public safety in Paris had passed a decree consisting of five clauses:—First, that four commissioners should be sent to America, with the greatest secrecy, with full powers to arrest Genet, Dupont, and other French officials. Secondly, that these commissioners should one of them act as minister plenipotentiary, another as consul general, a third as consul in the state of Pennsylvania; but that no one measure should be taken except in concert and signed by all. Thirdly, that the criminal conduct of Genet and his accomplices should be formally disavowed by the acting minister, and that the aid of the American government be requested to arrest, and put them on board ship. Fourthly, that the commissioners should disarm all the privateers commissioned by Genet, and prohibit all Frenchmen from violating the neutrality of the United States. Fifthly, that all consuls that took any part in equipping such privateers, and in the condemnation of the prizes made by them, should be cashiered; the commissioners being empowered to appoint persons temporarily in their place. This decree was signed by Barrère, Herault, Robespierre, Billaud-Varennes, and Collot d'Herbois.*

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an ignorant clique, and such unequivocal encouragement received from men like Adams, there is really some excuse for the egregious folly of this empty and arrogant representative of an equally arrogant and unprincipled government.]

* [This decree was perfectly wise and just. But was it Genet's intrigues, or their failure, which made him a victim instead of a hero? The line of demarcation in such cases is often so fine that history cannot discern it.]

IX.

SUPPRESSED LETTERS.

[The following is the matter referred to at p. 213:]

RAVENSWORTH, *December* 1, 1838.

MY DEAR SIR,—The publication of Mr. Jefferson's 'writings,' and of works to which they have given rise, has directed attention anew to the subject of a correspondence, which is alleged to have taken place between General Washington and Mr. Jefferson, after the former retired from the Presidency. You are aware that, in a letter to Mr. Van Buren, dated June 29, 1824, Mr. Jefferson denied that any letters whatever passed between General Washington and himself after the period referred to; for though his denial is pointed more particularly against any correspondence between them on the subject of his famous letter to Mazzei, it extends plainly enough to the existence of any upon any subject. His words are:—'My last parting with General Washington was at the inauguration of Mr. Adams, in March, 1797, and was warmly affectionate; and I never had any reason to believe any change on his part, as there certainly was none on mine. But one Session of Congress intervened between that and his death, the year following, in my passage to and from which, as it happened to be not convenient to call on him, I never had another opportunity; and *as to the cessation of correspondence* observed during that short interval, no particular circumstance occurred for epistolary communication, and both of us were too much oppressed with letter-writing to trouble either the other with a letter about nothing.'



It is obvious that any correspondence, and especially an angry one, between Washington and Jefferson, after March 1797, is incompatible with the veracity of the foregoing extract. Still I should deem the argument on this subject in Major Lee's 'Observations on the Writings of Jefferson' sufficient to satisfy candid enquirers after truth, were it not for the statements Professor Tucker has given to the world in his recent biography of that gentleman. He says, at page 524 of the first volume of that work: 'The supposition,' viz., of the correspondence in question, 'seems to be either a mere inference from doubtful facts, or to rest on vague, unsupported, and improbable rumour.' Then, after stating the inference and arguing against its justice, he adds: 'There was also a rumour on this subject that Rawlins, whom General Washington employed about this time as an amanuensis, told a merchant in Alexandria that he had copied a letter from the General to Mr. Jefferson relative to the Mazzei letter, which was so very severe, "*it made his hair stand on end.*" I have enquired into this story, and it seems as unsupported as the rest. Rawlins is dead; and *no one is alive who pretends to have heard Rawlins make the assertion.*'

Knowing how long Mr. Tucker has enjoyed your intimate acquaintance, I confess I was surprised at the assertion with which this extract concluded. Recollecting how often he has seen from your doors the trees of Mount Vernon—how well he knew your near relationship to General Washington, your double connection with his family, and the strong likelihood of your being able to give him authentic information concerning its traditions—it seemed to me so natural and proper that he should have applied to you when enquiring 'into the truth of this story' (as he undertakes to call the assertions of such men as Colonel Pickering and Dr. Stuart), that it is even yet with difficulty that I can reconcile the respect I feel for Mr. Tucker with his omission to have done so. You will see, at once, the natural effect of the part he has taken. It may now be fairly and forcibly urged—that here is a work, assuming the character of impartial history, written by a gentleman whose children are the grand-children of the

niece of Washington—that the author's connection with the family of that illustrious man, while it afforded the means of obtaining that more intimate knowledge of him which is seldom transferred to history, naturally made him also more anxious to disseminate it accurately—yet he treats the assertion of a nearer connection of that same family as an idle story. It cannot be supposed that he did so until he had exhausted those sources of information on the subject to which he had the easiest access, and as he obtained none worthy of his regard, it must be presumed that none such existed.

I think you will agree with me, that truth in relation to this point of history is in danger of suppression, and that, too, to the detriment of the characters of those whom you respect, and to the undue advantage of the reputation of one, whom the family of Washington (as far as I have the honour of their acquaintance) regard with a very different sentiment. To prevent this is an object of sufficient importance, I hope, to entitle me to your compliance with the request which is the object of this letter, and to justify which I have fatigued you with this long preface. Will you, my dear sir, give me a written statement of whatever your memory can furnish on the subject of this last correspondence? It is proper to tell you that, with your permission, I shall make use of the testimony you may furnish in the edition of Major Lee's 'Observations on the Writings of Jefferson,' which I am preparing for the press. Please, therefore, make it as circumstantial as you can conveniently; for details will carry that conviction to the minds of strangers, which your character will exact from those who know you. But, however brief your statement, it will be important, and gratefully received by, dear Sir,

Yours, most sincerely,

C. C. LEE.

To Lawrence Lewis, Esq.

DEAR SIR,—In compliance with your request, I now send you all the information I have upon the subject of the letters



said to have passed between General Washington and Mr. Jefferson, a short time before the death of the General. I resided at Mount Vernon at the time. An old friend, Mr. Francis Thornton, and Mr. Samuel Washington, called to see me. After dinner, whilst sitting round the table, Colonel Tobias Lear and G. W. P. Custis being also present, Mr. Thornton inquired, 'if a very friendly correspondence had not taken place between General Washington and Mr. Jefferson but a short time before the General's death; that such was the report at Fredericksburg?' I answered, 'It must be one of the many reports in circulation without the least foundation.' Colonel Lear immediately said, 'Yes, it is so, for I have seen the letters.' (At this time Colonel Lear had been put in possession of all General Washington's letters and papers by the late Judge Washington, and was daily in the office arranging and selecting those papers necessary for the biography of Washington.) I stated my reasons for supposing it a mere report, and reminded Colonel Lear of a conversation which had taken place between himself, General Washington, and Dr. David Stuart, when I was present. He said, 'Yes, but it was after that.' It so happened that Dr. Stuart came to Mount Vernon that evening. I informed him of Lear's assertion. He appeared to doubt it, and referred to the conversation between Lear, General Washington and himself, when I was present. He then remarked, 'I shall see Lear in Alexandria in the morning, and will get him to be more explicit.' Upon his return to Mount Vernon he informed me he had seen Lear, who repeated to him what he had said at the table the day before, but refused to communicate the contents of the letters, and asserted they *were of a very friendly nature.* The Doctor still doubted the accuracy of Colonel Lear's statement, and requested me to invite Mr. Rawlins (General Washington's confidential clerk) to walk with us. During our walk, the Doctor asked him if he had any recollection of a correspondence between General Washington and Mr. Jefferson, but a short time before the General's death. Rawlins answered, 'Yes.' Dr. Stuart: 'Will you tell us the subject of those letters?' Mr. Rawlins: 'I feel myself bound to secrecy in everything relating

to the General's letters.' 'But you can say whether they were of a friendly nature or not,' said Dr. Stuart. Rawlins: 'I think I may venture so far — *they were not.*' The first was, he said, rather a letter of enquiry; the second one was so severe, and excited his feelings so much, that the hair appeared to rise on his head as he recorded it, and he felt that it must produce a duel; that the third letter was of a milder tone, but not a very gratifying one. The above is what I heard Rawlins say myself. Various were the conjectures as to the cause which produced this correspondence. Dr. Stuart was of opinion it must have been the Mazzei letter, and, under that impression, his communication to Colonel Pickering was made. It is proper to state that Mr. Rawlins was highly respected by all the members of the family at Mount Vernon. — Be pleased to accept the regard and esteem of your friend,

LAWR. LEWIS.

Woodlawn, January 15, 1839.

The facts, then, which bear upon this subject, are:—

1. The certainty that Washington's relations with Jefferson had for a considerable time previous to the death of the former — that is, from 1795 to 1799 — ceased to be cordial, as proved by Jefferson's own admissions in his writings, vol. ix. p. 99; and the language of Washington after the Langhorne affair, in one of his letters, in which he says:— 'Nothing short of the evidence you have adduced, corroborative of intimations I had received long before from another channel, could have shaken my faith in the sincerity of a friendship which I am convinced was possessed for me by the person (Jefferson) to whom you allude.'*

* Washington's Writings, vol. xi. p. 228; Letter to Mr. Nicholas. The Langhorne affair was this:—A Mr. Nicholas, having heard that a letter in the handwriting of General Washington had been lying at the district post-office, addressed to a Mr. Langhorne, and knowing there was no such person in the neighbourhood, was induced to make inquiries, from which it had resulted that this letter had been called for and taken away by a gentleman, a neighbour of Jefferson's, and



2. The positive declaration of two gentlemen of position and character, that an angry correspondence had occurred between Washington and Jefferson.

3. The confirmation of this assertion by Washington's amanuensis, who positively declared there had been such a correspondence, in contradiction of Major Lear's assertion, that there had been none; and who, as having been intrusted with Washington's papers, was in a position to know.

4. The singular fact that Mr. Tucker should have been induced to say that there was no person living, at the time he wrote, who had heard Rawlins make the assertion attributed to him, when a living member of the Washington family, with whom he was well acquainted, had heard it, and was quite ready to say so.

5. The statement made by Mr. Jared Sparkes, who says: 'When I mentioned the subject to Judge Washington, he said, cautiously, that he had never charged any person with abstracting papers;' a form of expression that could hardly have been used, had he believed no papers had been abstracted.*

What is certain is, that irritation existed, and that for a considerable time previous to Washington's death, all personal or other *friendly* intercourse had ceased between him and Jefferson.]

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deep in his confidence. Mr. Nicholas reported the circumstance to Washington, who had, in fact, received a letter a few days before with the signature of Langhorne, the object of which had been to entrap him into some admission that could be turned to the prejudice of the Federalist administration. Thus made acquainted with the trick which had been played upon him, and with the probability of Jefferson's direct or indirect connection with it—possibly, too, as may be inferred, with other disagreeable facts—he wrote, as above stated, to Mr. Nicholas.

* Sparkes's Life of Washington, p. 82. Mr. Sparkes says: "In the last three years of Washington's life there is no record of a correspondence between them, nor any paper of importance in which the name of Jefferson is incidentally alluded to.' It is his opinion, however, that the charge of abstraction rests on a slight foundation.



X.

VIOLATION OF NEUTRAL RIGHTS.

[AS some discussion has recently arisen whether France or England was the first to embark in that wholesale violation of neutral rights which culminated in the Berlin and Milan decrees and the English orders in Council, it may be interesting to give Hamilton's view of the subject in 1797, extracted from an able series of letters entitled the 'Warning,' and published under the signature of 'Americus:'—

'I have asserted (says Hamilton, in his first letter of March 13, 1797) that the conduct of Great Britain towards us and other neutral powers has been at no period so exceptional as that of France at the present juncture. A more distinct view of this truth may be useful, which will be assisted by a retrospect of the principal acts of violation on both sides.

'Though the circumstances were contemporarily disclosed in all our newspapers, yet so blind and deaf were we rendered by our partiality for France, that few among us, till very lately, have been aware that the first of those acts is fairly chargeable upon her. Such, notwithstanding, is the fact. The first in order of time is a decree of the National Convention, of May 9, 1793, which, reciting that neutral flags are not respected by the enemies of France, and enumerating some instances of alleged violation, proceeds to authorise the vessels of war and cruisers of France to arrest and conduct into her ports *all neutral vessels* which are found *laden*, in *whole* or in *part*, with *provisions belonging to neutrals*, or *merchandises* belonging to the *enemies* of France: the latter to be confiscated as prize for the benefit of the captors; the former to be detained, but paid for according to their value, at the places for which they were destined.



'The instances enumerated as the pretext for so direct and formal an attack upon the rights of neutral powers, except two, turn upon the pretension to capture goods of an enemy in the ships of a friend. Of the remaining two, one is the case of an American vessel going from Falmouth to St. Maloes with a cargo of wheat, which the decree states was taken by an English frigate and carried into Germany, where the agents of the English Government detained the cargo, upon a promise to pay the value, as not being for French account; the other is the case of some French passengers going in a *Genoese* vessel from *Cadiz* to *Bayonne*, who were plundered on the passage by the crew of an English privateer.

'There is no question but that Great Britain, from the beginning of the war, has claimed and exercised the right of capturing the property of her enemies found in neutral bottoms, and it has been unanswerably demonstrated, that for this she has the sanction of the general law of nations. But France, from the exercise of that right by Great Britain, when not forbidden by any treaty, can certainly derive no justification for the imitation of the practice, in opposition to the precise and peremptory stipulations of her treaties. Every treaty which established the rule of '*free ships free goods*,' must have contemplated the unequal operation of that rule to the contracting parties, when one was at peace, the other at war; looking for indemnification to the correspondent of taking friends' property in enemies' ships, and to the reciprocal effect of the rule when the state of peace and war should be reversed. To make its unequal operation in an existing war an excuse for disregarding the rule, is, therefore, a subterfuge for a breach of faith, which hardly seeks to save appearances. France, as she once was, would have blushed to use it. It is one, among many instances, of the attempts of revolutionary France to dogmatise mankind out of its reason, as if she expected to work a change in the faculties as well as in the habits and opinions of men.

'The case of the American vessel carried to Guernsey, is that of a clear infraction of neutral right. But standing singly, it was insufficient evidence of a plan of the British Government to pursue the principle. It countenanced



suspicion of a secret order for the purpose; but it did not amount to *proof* of such an order. There might have been misapprehension or misrepresentation, or, if neither was the case, the circumstance was resolvable into the mere irregularity of particular agents—it is unjustifiable to ascribe to a Government as the result of a premeditated plan, and to use as the ground of reprisals, a single case of irregularity happening in a detached portion of the dominions of that Government. France was bound to have waited for more full evidence. There was no warrant in a solitary precedent for general retaliation, even if we could admit the detestable doctrine, that the injustice of one belligerent power towards neutral nations is a warrant for similar injustice in another.

'The violation of the courtesy of war in the instance of the French passengers, however brutal in itself, was truly a frivolous pretext for the decree. The frequency of irregular conduct in the commanders and crews of privateers, even in contempt of the regulations of their own governments, naturally explains such a transaction into the cupidity of individuals, and forbids the imputation of it to their governments. There never was a war in which similar outrages did not occur, in spite of the most sincere endeavours to prevent them.

'The natural and plain conclusion is, that the decree in question was a wanton proceeding in the French Government, uncountenanced by the previous conduct either of its enemies, or of the neutral nations who were destined to punishment for their faults.

'For the first order of the British Government authorising the seizure of provisions is dated June 6, 1793, nearly a month posterior to the French decree. As there is not the least vestige of any prior order, the presumption is that none ever existed. If any had existed, the course of things has been such as to afford a moral certainty that it would have appeared. The subsequent date of the British order is a strong confirmation of the argument, that the affair of the vessel carried to Guernsey was nothing more than a particular irregularity.

'The publicity of all the proceedings of the French Govern-



ment, and the celerity of communication between Paris and London, leave no doubt that the decree of May 9 was known in London before the order of June 6. It follows that France herself furnished to Great Britain the example and the pretext for the most odious of the measures with which she is chargeable; and that, so far as precedent can justify crime, Great Britain may find in the conduct of France the vindication of her own.

'An obvious reflection presents itself. How great was the infatuation of France thus to set the example of an interruption of neutral commerce in provisions, in the freedom of which she was so much more interested than her adversaries! If the detention of the cargo at Guernsey was a bait, we cannot but be astonished at the stupid levity with which it was swallowed.

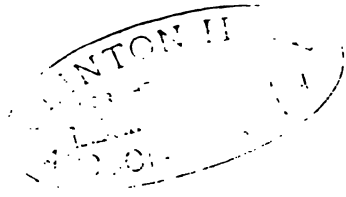
'We are no less struck with the eager precipitancy with which France seized the pretext for a formal and systematic invasion of the rights of neutral powers; equally regardless of the obligations of treaty, and of the injunctions of the laws of nations. The presumption of the connivance of the neutral power in infractions of its rights is the only colourable ground for the French idea of retaliation on the sufferers. Here the yet early stage of the war, and the recency of the facts alleged as motives to the decree, preclude the supposition of connivance. The unjust violence of France, consequently, in resorting to retaliation, stands without the slightest veil. From this prominent trait we may distinguish, without possibility of mistake, the real character of her system.'

'In his fifth letter, after repeating what he had said, that France had the culpable preeminence of having taken the lead in the violation of neutral rights, he adds that this violation was not only prior to that of Great Britain, but more comprehensive, and that 'the French decree as to the United States was repeatedly suspended and revived, as suited the momentary interests of France. As to the other neutral nations, it continued a permanent precedent to sanction the practice of Great Britain.' Again, he observes: 'The two edicts of her Proconsuls in the West Indies (Santhonax and Co., Nov. 27, 1796, Victor Hugues, 13th Pluviose, 5th year of the Republic), proclaim the capture of *all neutral vessels bound to*

or coming from English ports, and the uniform consequence is confiscation of vessels and cargo. We are now likewise officially informed that a French consular tribunal at Cadiz has condemned neutral vessels carried in there on the same broad principle.'*

Such is Hamilton's view of the relative demerits of the two countries, and was, at that time, and on the spot where he wrote, an important one. To us, where two nations behaved so badly, it is not of much importance which behaved the worst. But it is not admissible that the one which was the first — if Hamilton be right — to commit the wrong, and which, at all events, was bound by special treaties, overriding any abstract right derived from the law of nations, not to commit it, should be allowed to say in the way of justification, 'It was you that forced me to do it by doing it first.' It must be remembered too that the feeling in America had been friendly to France, and spiteful to England, which makes the case of the French worse.

* Hamilton's Works, vol. ix. pp. 634, 636.





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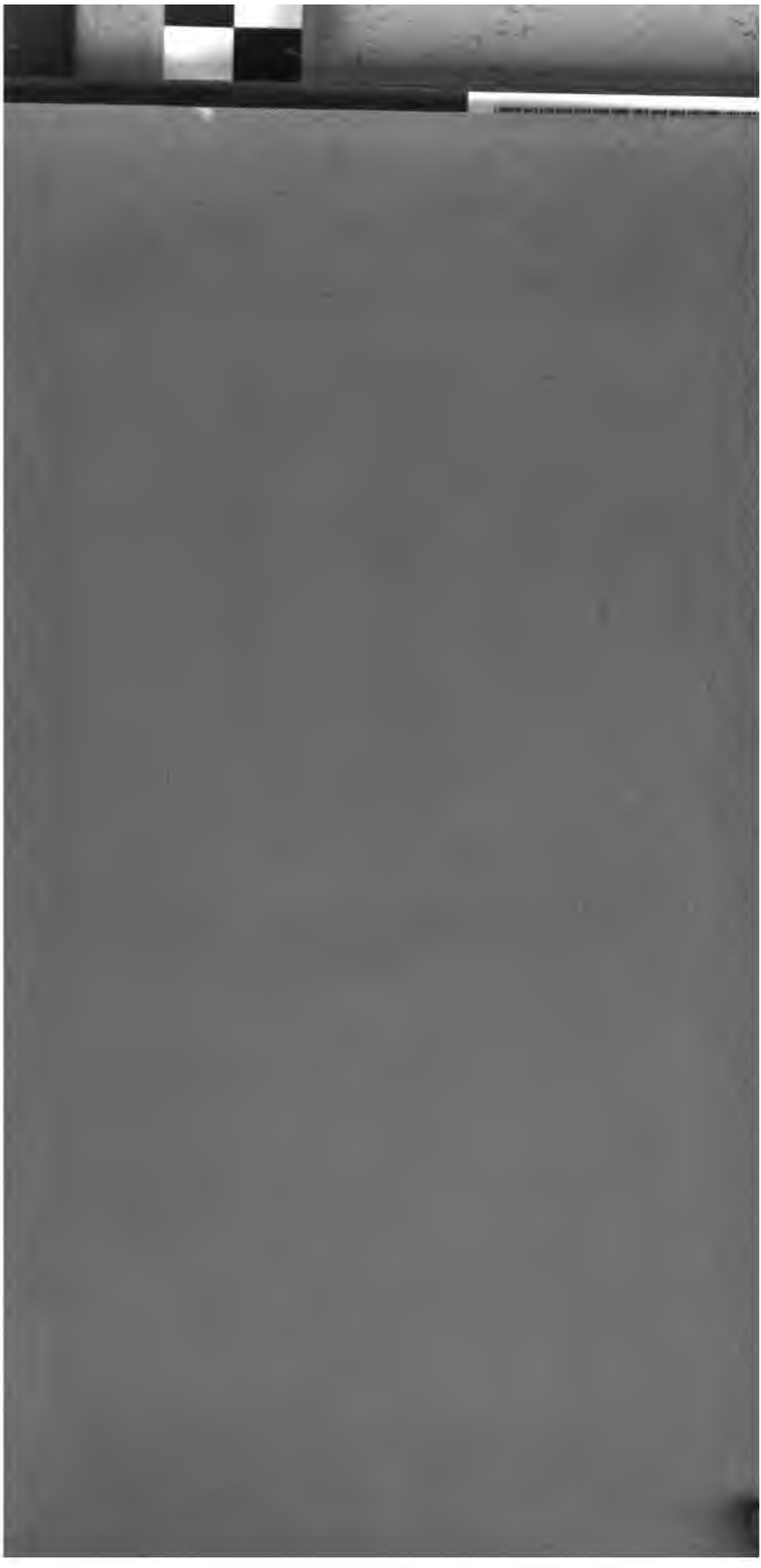
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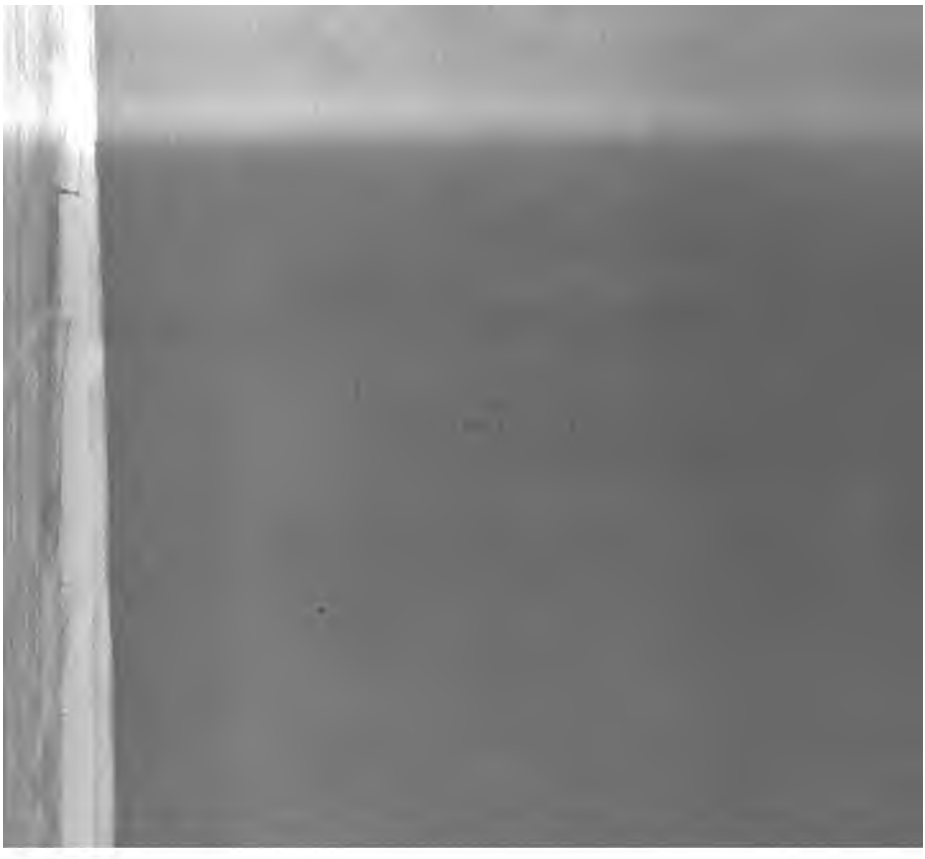
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